

# THE NILE

An Encyclopedia of Geography,  
History, and Culture

*John A. Shoup*





**Map of Egypt showing the course of the Nile. Nearly all of Egypt's population is crowded into the narrow Nile Valley.**

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JOHN A. SHOUP



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## Preface

The Nile River stretches 4,258 miles (6,853 kilometers) from its mouth on the Mediterranean Sea to its original source, the Kagera River in Burundi. It is the longest river on Earth, although not one with the largest discharge of water by volume. On average, the Nile's discharge is only 5,500 square feet (5,100 square meters) per second, making it rank far behind the Amazon and Congo Rivers as well as the Mississippi–Missouri–Jefferson system in the United States.

This book describes the Nile and the civilizations that grew up along its banks from Central Africa to the highlands of Ethiopia to the Mediterranean Sea. The book is divided into several sections, beginning with thematic essays that examine key topics and ideas relevant to the Nile, followed by entries covering the geographical features (both natural and human-made such as dams) as well as the peoples and cultures that grew up along the Nile. The final section, excerpts of primary documents, includes translations of ancient Egyptian texts, accounts of explorers, and modern agreements on the use of the Nile's water.

The Nile plays an extremely important role in the life of Egypt, being the sole source of freshwater. It was said by Greek historian Herodotus that Egypt is the “gift of the Nile,” and it is true that Egypt could not exist without the Nile. Through most of Egypt, the Nile flows through a narrow valley of some 12 miles (19 kilometers) in width. The valley's sides are steep cliffs of sandstone, limestone, and granite. The narrow valley made it possible for the formation of a state early in its history, and Upper Egypt unified during the predynastic period (dynasty zero) and was able to impose its control over the delta. It also made Egypt usually inward looking, and it did not move its capital to the Mediterranean coast until the Ptolemaic period.

The last tributary reaches the Nile in Sudan. The Atbara River flows out of the highlands of Ethiopia and joins the Nile north of Khartoum. The Nile then flows through desert until it reaches the delta. The river loses a great deal of water to evaporation, and today it loses much more at Lake Nasser, which was



formed by the Aswan High Dam. The Aswan High Dam was built to provide electricity for the country's modernization and to control the annual Nile flood. The last year of uncontrolled flooding was 1970. Today, the Aswan High Dam holds three years' worth of water in Lake Nasser, and water is released to maintain the Nile at a constant level no matter the time of year and no matter whether the floodwaters from Ethiopia were too little in a particular year.

The ancient Egyptians believed that the Nile god, Hapi, lived in a cave under Elephantine Island at Aswan and that the Nile flood began from there. Hapi was depicted as a man with folds of fat and large breasts to indicate the fertility and prosperity the flood brought. Today the controlled flood is a source of great concern because the silt left behind by the floodwaters that made Egypt fertile must be replaced by chemical fertilizers. The Nile delta also faces threats from the Mediterranean Sea and global warming. Lands in the delta have become salt swamps as the Mediterranean begins to penetrate inland. If much of the book seems to have too much emphasis on Egypt, the authors apologize, but as readers will see, the Nile is of prime importance to Egypt today as it has been throughout history.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the many people who helped make this book possible. First, I thank my contributors, Geri Shaw and Dr. Connell Monette. Geri and I took the course “Geography of Africa” from Dr. James King together years ago at the University of Utah, and his class greatly increased my personal interest in Africa and the Nile River. Connell is a colleague at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, and we have collaborated on several projects in the past. I would like to thank my deans, Drs. Mohamed Dahbi and now Nizar Messari, for encouraging publications by their faculty members. I feel I need to also thank Dr. Walter Armbrust. It was his invitation to visit him in Cairo that brought me to Egypt for the first time in 1986. This was only one month after the security forces had rioted over low pay and the country was nearly empty of tourists. In 1987, I returned to Egypt for an extended visit (a Nile “cruise” from Aswan to Luxor on a felucca) and decided I would like to live and work in Egypt. The end result was that I accepted a job at the American University in Cairo, where I was from 1990 to 1996. I had no hesitation about accepting the job offer when it came. I would like to thank Kaitlin Ciarmiello of ABC-CLIO Press for being a constant support during the writing process; although we have collaborated several times, we have yet to meet. I need to thank my parents, John and Nellie (now both deceased), who gave me books such as those by Alan Moorehead, *The White Nile* and *The Blue Nile*, that helped fuel my interest in the Nile and the peoples who live along its banks. Finally, I would like to thank my sister Heather and my nieces Gail and Charlotte for their love and support.

**Part I**  
**Thematic Essays**

## THE NILE RIVER BASIN



**The Nile Basin drains Central Africa and the Horn of Africa. It is separated from the Congo that drains most of Central Africa by a narrow range that marks the western side of the Great Rift Valley.**

# Geography of the Nile

Like most bodies of water, along its course the Nile River includes many major features—lakes, falls, and rapids or cataracts. The Nile begins in the highlands of Burundi and Rwanda and flows ever northward through several lakes, including Lake Victoria, the largest freshwater lake in Africa, and Lake Edward before it enters the Sudd, the great swamp that blocks much of the water from Central Africa before it emerges as the White Nile and continues on to Khartoum. There the White Nile joins the Blue Nile. Between Khartoum and Aswan, the river goes through five cataracts or rapids that historically held up navigation on the river except during the annual flood.

The Nile has many tributaries, the last being the Atbara River, which joins the Nile north of Khartoum. Most of the major tributaries flow from the highlands of Ethiopia and increase the flow of the Nile's annual flood. Now controlled, the Nile has been dammed along its course from nearly its start to Aswan. The Nile was also dammed north of Cairo to put water into canals that helped increase the amount of land under cultivation.

Finding the source of the Nile was one of Europe's long-sought dreams and produced centuries of adventure. Many of those who sought to find the answer to that question were struck down with tropical diseases, making the long and dangerous walk to the interior of Africa even more dangerous. Until the end of the 19th century, when European medicine made it possible to live in Central Africa, much of Africa remained outside of direct European contact. Instead, stories told by native, Arab, and Swahili merchants had to serve as sources of information. Among the first maps that showed the position of the Nile and its possible sources was one created by Greco-Egyptian scholar Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria (died 170 CE). Early maps of Africa were vague or filled with fabled cities and civilizations, although the map of al-Sharif al-Idrisi, which was drawn for the Norman king of Sicily in the 1150s and 1160s, was among the most accurate for centuries. Although al-Idrisi has two Niles emerging from the

same three lakes at the foot of the Mountains of the Moon, his location was more or less accurate in setting the location of Lake Victoria. His Mountains of the Moon are not exactly where the Ruwenzori Mountains are, but he is correct that they supply much of the water for the White Nile. His second Nile may be the Congo, the Niger, or the Senegal River. If it is the Congo, he was partially right that it starts just to the west of the Nile basin and on the other side of the Ruwenzori Mountains.

Both the Ptolemy map (first century CE) and the al-Idrisi map (middle of the 12th century CE) more or less show the major parts of the Nile. They served as the best possible information until the second part of the 19th century when more precise surveying techniques and equipment (such as survey scopes and chronometers) mapped much of Africa. The Blue Nile was discovered by Portuguese missionaries who had been sent to convert the Christian king of Ethiopia to Western Christianity (to Catholicism instead of the Coptic faith). Their work was ignored and denigrated by James Bruce, whose name today is connected to the discovery of the Blue Nile. Unlike most other Europeans who claimed to have discovered parts of the Nile, Bruce actually traveled most of the course of the Blue Nile, tracing it from its origins in Lake Tana to where it joins the White Nile.



**Claudius Ptolemy wrote a major work of geography and included a number of fairly accurate maps based on the tales of travelers. His sources of the Nile (lakes in central Africa) are close to the actual location of Lake Victoria. (New York Public Library)**

In addition to its natural features, the Nile has many human-made features,

the most important and influential being the Aswan High Dam. The High Dam (so named because a Low Dam at Aswan had already been built in the early 20th century by the British) was the dream of Egyptian president Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir (Gamal Abdel Nasser) to provide Egypt with electricity to run the country's drive toward modernization. It was also planned to hold the supply of three years of water behind the dam and break Egypt's dependence on annual flooding. Water levels in the river below the dam were to be controlled, with the canal's network irrigation allowing more agricultural production and giving Egypt at least 20 years economic growth. The dam was to be paid for by the fees from the Suez Canal, but the nationalization of the Suez by Nasir in 1956 sparked a war with Great Britain, France, and Israel, (they all sent troops, not only Israel) attacking Egypt.

Other dams on the Nile or its tributaries have been built in Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia. However, negotiations with Great Britain were done while that nation was still a colonial master; the main concern was to not allow the dams to hold the water needed for Egypt's and Sudan's cotton production to become successful on a wide scale. Cotton is a summer crop (the time of the annual flood), and starting in the time of Muhammad 'Ali cotton became a major Egyptian export. In the course of the 19th century, Egyptian cotton became a main raw supply of British textile mills, and Britain wanted to ensure its supply of cotton from Egypt. Once Sudan was included again in the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, or joint rule of Sudan by both Egypt and Great Britain, Sudan's agricultural production included schemes for cotton for British factories. Although other countries were allowed to build dams on the Nile and its tributaries to supply electricity and push modernization projects, they could not compromise the total yearly needs of Egypt and Sudan. Since independence in the 1950s, Egypt and Sudan have not been willing to renegotiate these treaties, and Egypt even threatened Ethiopia with war should that country build a dam that would disturb the total flow of the Blue Nile.





**A gamusah, or water buffalo, serves as the powerhouse of peasant economies in both Egypt and Sudan. They are used for sources of energy for plowing fields, turning waterwheels, as well as to produce milk for butter and cheese. (John A. Shoup)**

The Nile is 4,258 miles (6,853 kilometers) long, although the total length has not yet been agreed on and various authorities claim it is either longer or shorter by a few miles. Its drainage basin covers 10 percent of the African continent. However, two-fifths of the basin contributes little to no water to the river and is composed of deep desert or arid, rocky plains. The river's depth varies according to where it is measured but averages between 25 and 33 feet (7.6 and 10 meters) deep. Because of the movement of tectonic plates, the Nile's portion in Sudan has six cataracts or rapids (the first south of Aswan marks the traditional southern border of Egypt) where rocks have been forced to the surface and the river's depth is shallow. The same tectonic action some 100,000 years ago caused the Nile to make its "Great Bend." Here the Nile flows west and south into the desert before heading north again toward Egypt and the Mediterranean. Called the Nubian Swell, the Nile valley in the area of the cataracts is restricted by granite that hems it in and leaves no flood plain. The river increases speed and behaves like a young mountain river. The lack of a good flood plain has meant it is sparsely populated even today. The average annual flow of the river as measured at Aswan is 2,966 billion cubic feet (84 billion cubic meters or 5,500 square feet per second or 510 square meters per second) per year. The annual flow is small compared with other great rivers of the world and ranks far behind the Congo, Amazon, Mississippi–Missouri, and Yangtze.

Ancient Egyptians believed the annual flood was caused when Hapy, the god of the Nile, awoke and sent it forth from a cave underneath Elephantine Island at Aswan. From ancient times, the southern tip of Elephantine had a nilometer to

measure the flow. Many ancient temples included nilometers, and they were still important in the Islamic period. In fact, one of the oldest Islamic buildings in Cairo is the nilometer at the southern tip of Rawdah Island. The Nile began to rise in June and reached its height in October, when it had a secondary flood, and began to recede in November three to five weeks later. Its lowest point was at the end of May and early June before the floodwaters began again. The level of the flood was highest in Aswan, where it reached 45 feet (13.7 meters) but was lower as the flood plain began to spread out the water to 38 feet (11.6 meters) at Luxor and 25 feet (7.6 meters) at Cairo. The two stages of the flood were a result of the arrival of the Blue Nile's flood and then the arrival of floodwaters from the Atbara. The ancient Egyptians divided the year into three major seasons: *akhet* (flood), *peret* (growth), and *shemu* (drought or harvest). The first season was marked by the rise of Sirius, which began the Egyptians' yearly calendar. Sirius plays a major role in many African societies and therefore Europeans assumed that such distant peoples as the Dogon of Mali were of Egyptian origin. It was during the flood season when the pharaohs used idle peasants as labor for their massive monuments and navigated the Nile with large stone blocks for pyramids and other buildings. Unlike the popular belief, Egypt did not have massive numbers of slaves to build its monuments but used free peasants as labor.

The greatest fear of Egyptians was of no flood or low flood that brought famine. The obsession of Egyptians with the river is easy to understand when the closest affluent is hundreds of miles upstream in Sudan. For ancient Egyptians, even when they dominated northern Sudan, the Nile seemed to flow miraculously from the deep desert. As early as the Old Kingdom (3100–2150 BCE), pharaohs attempted to find the source of Nile only to be blocked by the Sudd. It seems that at least one such expedition tried to get around the Sudd and ended up in what is now the Central African Republic and brought back a pygmy as proof of its penetration into Africa. The mystery of where the Nile begins sparked the great expeditions of exploration by Victorians that pitted British "civilization" against African "savagery."

The river made it possible for Egypt to exist and to be the richest country in the Mediterranean and Middle East. Egypt's massive agricultural production allowed it to sell surplus to other nations, including Rome. Long before Rome became an empire, it had to buy wheat from Egypt, and the arrival of the grain fleets from Egypt were awaited with great expectations. As the Roman Empire developed, Egyptian wheat fed the capital city and much of Italy. Roman

farming could not compete, and dependence on Egypt's production made control of that nation important. When threatened by war between members of the Ptolemaic Dynasty or between Egypt and Syria, Rome felt it had to step in to make sure the wheat still arrived undisturbed.

The Nile is an integral part of the countries it flows through. It is the source of the civilizations that grew in Egypt and Sudan, and it remains essential to life in both countries. Egypt exists only because of the Nile, and Egypt was able to develop into a highly centralized state because of the control over the water exercised by a strong, central state. The need to understand where the Nile originated and the need to control the water led to imperial expansion by both Egypt and Great Britain. The contest for territorial control in Africa between the European powers after the 1885 Berlin Congress nearly led to France and Britain going to war in 1898. The two divided the region along water basins, with France taking the Congo and Britain the Nile. The Nile River exercises a great deal of importance to politics from ancient times until today, making it one of the most important rivers in history.

## Further Reading

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# History of the Nile

This encyclopedia provides essays on the histories of most of the states along the Nile from its source to the Nile River delta. These essays cover the most important information on the histories of the different states, but it may seem to the reader there is more emphasis on Egypt. Egypt is the most influential country of the Nile valley, and Egypt's economic and political interests in the Nile have dominated from the time of the pharaohs to the present. Egypt is also among the most important cultural centers on the Nile and because of its wealth was influential beyond the Nile valley to North Africa, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean Sea. Egypt influenced Europe and beyond. No other Nile valley state can equal Egypt's influence.

The earliest thumbprint of the Nile is called the Eonile, which today can be seen only in satellite imagery in the desert to the west of the present Nile. It dates from the Miocene Epoch or 23 million to 5 million years ago. During the Miocene, the Mediterranean Sea became a landlocked body and dried up. As a result, the Nile cut a deep valley below current sea levels, but when the Atlantic Ocean broke through the barrier at the Strait of Gibraltar, the Nile riverbed filled with silt and eventually flooded the Fayyum and created Lake Moeris. Lake Tanganyika used to drain into the Nile until the Virunga volcanoes blocked access to the Nile. The rift system also caused the Nile to change its channels, and at Lake Albert the Nile falls off the edge of the rift as Murchison Falls. During the Tertiary period (66 million to 2.58 million years ago), the several Niles merged into the one Nile of today. When there were periods of heavy rainfall 120,000–100,000 years ago and 80,000–70,000 years ago, the Atbara and Blue Nile, respectively, overflowed their catchment basins and joined the Nile. In the Neolithic (10,000–3,000 BCE), the Yellow Nile flowed from the Ouaddai Highlands in Chad to the Nile, but this river dried up around 1000 BCE. Today it is called Wadi Howar and is only a seasonal stream because of occasional rainfall.

The Nile River valley has produced many indigenous kingdoms and states over the millennia. The most famous may be ancient Egypt, but others have also come and gone. With the end of the Holocene Wet Phase around 3900 BCE, a period called the “5.9 kiloyear event,” the rapid growth of the Sahara desert forced humans and wildlife to migrate to find permanent water and grazing. The Nile itself was restricted to a single channel, and Egypt’s early civilization was a direct result of the need to find water and organize life along the Nile. Hemmed in by the river valley’s high cliffs, early Egyptians had to turn to agriculture for food production rather than depend on nomadic pastoralism. Further upstream in Sudan, desertification came more slowly, and large areas were found where cattle could graze. Today, the desert has expanded south, and green pastures fed by rainfall occur in central Sudan.

Although Egypt moved early into intensive farming and central state formation, Sudan’s better environmental conditions allowed a slower growth. Instead of the need to develop intensive farming, Sudan was able to develop pastoral societies with less centralized political systems but large religious centers such as Kerma, which became the capital of Nubia. The Nubians built a large, false hill of mud brick with a temple on the top now called the *Dafufah* by local people. Early Nubian culture at Kerma sacrificed large numbers of cattle, as many as 5,000 head for a single individual. The eventual drying up of the land meant that cattle could no longer be supported by the grazing lands; in addition, the Egyptians invaded and destroyed the early Nubian Kingdom, the population then becoming dominated by Egypt’s Middle Kingdom (2050–1650 BCE). Egypt’s expansion was marked by its building of forts and trade centers along the Nile as far south as the Fourth Cataract. Eventually, a Nubian royal house was itself able to become a pharaonic Egyptian dynasty (747–664 BCE) before being defeated and forced back to Nubia. Unable to recover from the loss of grazing lands due to desertification, other kingdoms later arose, and some even challenged Egyptian rule. As the desert grew, only the constant of the Nile allowed people to continue to live in Nubia. The Nubians had to take up farming and abandon cattle husbandry.

Egypt’s first interest in Kerma was the trade goods that arrived in Aswan: gold, ivory, cattle, and slaves. Egypt expanded south and militarily invaded several times. During the Hyksos period in Egypt, communications between the Hyksos in the Nile River delta and Nubia used the string of oases to the west of the Nile valley and plotted the destruction of the Egyptian dynasty of Thebes (modern Luxor). Egypt thwarted the plot by intercepting the letters between the

two rulers and then dealt with each adversary individually. Egypt expanded its control up the river and built major forts that also served as trade centers. The strong links between Egypt and Sudan have been maintained to this today. With the spread of the Arabic language and Islam into Sudan, the differences between the two peoples have become less pronounced. Sudanese became “Egyptians” under the joint Anglo–Egyptian rule and today Sudanese do not need a visa or a work permit to live and work in Egypt.



**The ‘Amr ibn al-‘As Mosque was the first mosque in Egypt and was first built in 642 CE just outside of the Roman fort, Bab-il-On. (John A. Shoup)**

Although the histories of Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia have long written records, states that grew up farther up the river do not. However, they are equally important in the record of the river. Bunyoro and Buganda were important states in today’s Uganda and are partially known from accounts of European explorers and missionaries. Both states existed to the end of the 19th century and remain today as part of Uganda. Both have a king recognized by the Ugandan government. The kings of Buganda treated Europeans explorers well and thus received “good press,” but the kings of Bunyoro were more suspicious of Europeans, perhaps because of their historic bad relations with Arab slavers from Sudan.

The contemporary history of the states along the Nile is also the story of European imperialism. In 1884–85, European countries met at the Council of Berlin to divide Africa among them. No African power was invited to the meeting, although the Ottoman Empire, being technically the master of Egypt, Sudan, and Libya, was asked to attend. Called the “Scramble for Africa,” the subsequent division of Africa among France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and the



United Kingdom was important for the Nile. In the end, the British controlled a huge swath of Africa from “Cairo to the Cape.” British colonial plans included a railway that would connect all of British-controlled Africa and bring “civilization and progress.” The Nile itself was also divided up by treaties imposed on indigenous states to make sure that Britain’s main economic interest in the Nile—Egypt’s (and later Sudan’s) cotton crop—had enough water.

In the first part of the 19th century, Muhammad ‘Ali of Egypt (ruled 1805–1849) had been advised by his French counselors to concentrate his economic development on increasing the cotton crop because of its major export value to Europe. By the 1860s, Britain was the major importer of Egyptian cotton, particularly when supplies from the United States were cut off by the Union blockade of Confederate ports during the American Civil War. In 1881, Britain came to the “rescue” of Egypt’s khedive from a nationalist revolt and ended up staying to ensure security. Britain became involved almost immediately in a revolt in Sudan and then in a revenge campaign to recover its lost “honor” when General Charles Gordon died in Khartoum in 1885. Britain’s joint rule of Sudan with Egypt, the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium, set the foundation for Africa’s longest civil war and continuing violence in today’s South Sudan. Colonial interference in African affairs continued in Uganda, for example, where the British supported the military takeover by Idi Amin Dada in 1971, as did the United States and Israel.

Idi Amin turned from his Western supporters to oil-rich Libya and the more radical Mu‘ammar Qaddafi. Amin cut relations with first Israel and later Great Britain and even organized food aid for the “starving poor” of Britain. He turned to the Arab world for support and was able to get it because of his anti-Israeli stance. For the Arabs, Uganda’s location was ideal for the expansion of Arab influence and Islam in Africa, and they had thought that Amin, a Muslim at least in name, was worth their support. However, the United States remained a supporter of Amin, whose advocate in Washington D.C. was the Central Intelligence Agency nearly to the end of his eight-year rule.

Although colonial interests are no longer the main issues for independent states along the Nile River, its water is. Many African states want to renegotiate their share of Nile water set by Great Britain in 1929 with the Nile Water Agreement, which established a minimum amount of water that was to reach Egypt—no less than 66 percent of the annual flow. Today, Egypt threatens military action against any African state that wants to use a greater share of the water than was established in the 1929 agreement. Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda,

Kenya, and Tanzania all want to take a new look at the international agreements about the Nile and want to renegotiate their shares. Egypt and Sudan, however, do not want to reduce their shares.

The history of the Nile is the history of attempts by numerous states to find and control its source. Military conquest of the peoples along its upper reaches was the policy from the pharaohs of Egypt to modern imperialists. European imperialism was contested by both the imperial ambitions of Egypt itself and local resistance. Among the most successful, at least for 10 years, was the *Mahdiyyah*, the Islamic state founded by Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi and his successor, the *khalifah*. Ethiopia also resisted Italian imperial designs until the rise of fascism under Mussolini. The other African states were placed under the colonial management of different countries: Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, and France. Most of the Nile River was under British control until the post-World War II period and the emergence of independence in Africa.

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## Religions of the Nile

The opening of the film *Khartoum* (1966) makes it clear that living along the banks of the Nile brings thoughts of gods, the greatness of the river, and the passage of time. The regularity of the Nile in the past and its unknown origins gave those who have lived along its shores much to wonder about. It is thought that the religious revolution by Pharaoh Amenhotep IV, or Akhenaton (ruled 1353–1336 BCE) as he wanted to be called, may be the first time monotheism appeared along the Nile. Akhenaton's religious reform, however, brought a major backlash by the priests of the older religion, one that returned to stay in place until the end of the Roman era. Ancient Egyptian religion is complex and malleable, absorbing other gods of conquered peoples and molding them into new ones. Although there were numerous gods, there was a strong tendency to believe in one god, the creator, who is chief among other gods. The invading Greeks under the Ptolemies both maintained their own gods and upheld the religion of ancient Egypt and also adapted some of their gods to those of the Egyptians. Serapis rose to become the chief god, a combination of the Greek god Zeus with the Apis Bull, an earthly manifestation of Ptah (in life) and Osiris (after death), two of the main gods who protected the pharaoh.

The Ptolemies also brought with them Hellenistic thought and opened one of the most important schools of classical philosophy and logic in Alexandria. The Ptolemaic pharaohs collected and housed the largest collections of books in the ancient world, not confining themselves only to Greek works but including those of the Persians and Hebrews among others. The school at Alexandria attracted numerous scholars and students, and the city had a large number of Jews, especially after the conquest of Palestine by the Romans and the expulsion of many Jews. The Jews had a ready home in Egypt with a sizable colony of Jews even in remote places such as Aswan from even before Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt. In Alexandria's open culture, Jews were welcomed.

Early Christianity in Egypt produced the Gnostics, those who combined

Greek concepts of logic with Christianity. They also influenced the thinking of many early Christian fathers such as the famous Cyril of Alexandria (376–444 CE). Cyril's strong personality and opinionated ideas brought him into conflict with the remaining pagans and Jews of the city, and his efforts brought about an imperial decree to close pagan temples and expel the Jews, a bloody event portrayed in the film *Agora* (2009). Cyril set his stamp firmly on Christianity in the Nicene Creed in which Mary is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), not the Mother of Christ (*Christotokos*). At the time, Alexandria was the primary center of Christian thought. With leaders like Cyril, the Alexandrian officials were able to use the classical training of the Alexandrian school against their rivals from Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome. However, in the controversies that took place later, Alexandria withdrew, and the Coptic Church became the first schism in Christianity in 451.

Judaism no longer has much presence among the peoples of the Nile. Although thriving Jewish communities were once found in Egypt and Ethiopia, since the creation of Israel their numbers have been greatly reduced. A major synagogue remains in Cairo but, although it is technically open the number of believers is too few for it to offer regular services. Ten adult men must be present hold a service, and fewer than 40 Jews remain in Cairo. Jews in Egypt have a long history, and in the early 20th century they still had prominent positions in society. Egypt received different Jewish communities over the centuries, mostly Arabic-speaking Sephardic Jews, but in the 19th and early 20th centuries European Ashkenazi Jews such as film director Fritz Kramp and set designer Robert Scharfenberg fled to Egypt from European persecution. Film director Togo Mizrahi was Jewish, and after the 1948 war he fled for Italy. Several well-known film and singing stars were Jewish such as the highly popular singer and actor Laila Murad. She converted to Islam and remained in the country until her death in 1995, but most other Jews left in the wake of the 1948 war for Israel or Britain or Canada. The population was reduced to some 40 in 2014 from the 1948 population of 80,000 Egyptian Jews. Ethiopian Jews—called the *Falasha* or *Bayta Isra'il*—were only granted the “right of return” by Israeli courts in 1977. The Israeli reluctance to include them came from the fact that they do not share all of the holy texts with all other Jews and Ge'ez had replaced Hebrew as the liturgical language. A synagogue is called a *masgid*, which is similar to the Muslim name for a neighborhood mosque—the Arabic *masjid* or *masgid* in Egyptian Arabic. Some Falasha remain in Ethiopia, but several air operations brought large numbers of them to Israel, where they have

faced discrimination. Nonetheless, Ethiopia's claim to a long Jewish history is part of its national epic, which claims a royal lineage beginning with the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. The holiest object in Judaism, the Ark of the Covenant, which holds the original Ten Commandments, are allegedly in Ethiopia.

When Christianity was introduced in Egypt, the urban population was attracted to it, but in rural areas old gods were maintained until the Emperor Theodosius I (ruled 379–395), also called “the Great,” proscribed the old beliefs and closed the temples of worship in 381. He continued to persecute followers of the older faith and between 389 and 392 issued several decrees that were to be adhered to throughout the Roman Empire and closed temples and forbade public worship of any religion other than Christianity. The Philae temple south of Aswan was the last place to hold out until the reign of Justinian (ruled 527–565 CE), who forced it to close in 553 CE. Christianity spread up the Nile valley, and Nubia developed Christian kingdoms. Ethiopia also adopted the Coptic faith of Egyptian Christians. The Coptic Church was persecuted by the Byzantines, and this made the Arab and Muslim conquest of Egypt easy and relatively quick.

Islam was the religion of the new Umayyad state (660–750) but not most Egyptians. Conversion to Islam happened slowly, and Islam did not penetrate into Sudan until much later. The majority of Egyptians were not Muslim until the ninth century, 200 years after the conquest. Islam is the main religion south along the Nile until South Sudan, where local belief systems and Christianity become the majority. Islam remains a minority religion in the southern Nile basin, although the kings of Buganda historically favored Muslims for a short time when they needed to counter European Christian missionaries. Ethiopia remained Coptic Christian, and its high officials were appointed by the church in Egypt until 1930.

During the colonial era, Christian missions were established in South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanganyika (now called *Tanzania*). They were often hostile to each other and even caused a Catholic–Protestant war in Uganda. Nonetheless, the three most dominant religions along the Nile today are Islam, Christianity (of various types), and traditional belief systems. In much of South Sudan, traditional religions are still practiced by approximately half the population despite more than 100 years of Christian missions and 50 years of official use of the Arabic language and Islam by Sudan. Islam penetrated from the north along the Nile and through the expansion of Egyptian control in the 19th century and from the Swahili coast with African peoples needing protection

from slavers. It is illegal in Islamic law to enslave a Muslim, and conversion to Islam brought a degree of protection from the slavers. Nonetheless, traditional religions are still practiced by large numbers of people along the shores of Nile, in the Nuba Mountains, and south along the course of the river. For some, such as the Azande, although they converted to Catholicism many believe Christianity does not deal with their actual problems as well as their traditional religion, so they maintain local courts using a system of divination that poisons chickens to find answers.

Traditional religion is linked to the right to be king or *reth* of the Shilluk. For the Shilluk, the reth is the reincarnation of the their founding hero and is divinely guided. For other Nilotic peoples in South Sudan, Christianity had some appeal. In particular, as Francis Mading Deng notes, Christian music was appealing to the Dinka, and they became Christianized because of it. The Ngok Dinka, however, are mostly Arabized and Islamized. Only around 20 percent of Dinka are Christian and a smaller percentage Muslim; the majority follow their traditional religion. The Nuer are similar, with 30 percent Christians and a lesser percentage Muslims. They also hold fast to their own traditional religion despite the actions of the Sudanese government to encourage conversion to Islam and Christian missions who have sought to convert them to Christianity. The Nuba allow children to choose which religion they want to follow, and with the Sudanese government's rewards for those who choose Islam, that religion has come to have the larger following with a significant minority following traditional religion and a higher percentage following traditional religion than Christianity. For other populations among the South Sudanese, the contest is more between Christian missions and traditional religions. Under the British, the adoption of Christianity was seen as a step toward "civilization" and away from "barbarity," a move up the social ladder to civilization. Many of those who converted to Christianity also kept their traditional beliefs, seeing them as answering different issues. The Azande are among those who generally were converted by Catholic missionaries but kept their traditional belief in spirits and witches.

Islam was generally rejected in South Sudan and Uganda because of its links to 19th-century penetration into African kingdoms by Arabic-speaking Muslim slavers and the continued racist attitudes of many northern Sudanese, even those who are just as dark as the South Sudanese. The issue of race and color is extremely complicated in Sudan and among the Arabs, where an Arab is defined as someone who speaks Arabic and is not a racial type. Most Sudanese are



Arabized Arabs and not of ethnic Arab origin, but they have adopted Arab genealogies that link them to known Arab tribes or individuals. These genealogies are not contested and are accepted as valid truth wherever Arabs have gone. A black Sudanese Arab considers his color to be blue rather than black. Perhaps if the British had allowed Arab merchants to establish trade in the south and intermarry with South Sudanese, the problems would have been avoided and the South Sudanese would have adopted Arab identities. However, this did not happen in Darfur, where the Fur converted to Islam but did not adopt Arab identities, just like the Beja along the Red Sea coast who converted to Islam but did not adopt Arab identities. They were converted by Sufis (Islamic mystics) who generally turn a blind eye to shamanistic practices. For this reason, the Beja and the Fur still cling to pre-Islamic practices that now have Islamic explanations.

Today the religions along the Nile River remain an interesting mix of local traditions, Islam (orthodox and mystical Sufi brotherhoods), Christianity, and Judaism, which has a few adherents. Islam dominates most of the north, but Coptic Christianity has deep roots in Egypt. Copts believe the apostle Mark founded their church in Alexandria within a few years of Christ's death and resurrection. Ancient Egyptian beliefs in the death and resurrection of Osiris and the mother and child figures of Isis and Horus helped the spread of Christianity. Alexandria had the most influence in early Christianity, but in 451 the Coptic Church split from the other major centers of Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Rome. It is now independent and the dominant religion in Ethiopia. Traditional religions remain in folk and popular practice among Muslims and Christians as well as being the dominant religions in South Sudan. Religions along the Nile are among the most interesting and complicated belief systems in the world.

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## Politics and the Nile

The politics of the Nile River are most concerned with the amount of water that reaches Egypt. Every treaty that governs the flow of the Nile was negotiated by the British because of their significant economic interests in Egypt's cotton production. The treaties began with the 1891 pact between two colonial powers, Italy and Britain, over the Atbara tributary of the Nile; the Italians agreed to not construct any hindrance on the flow of the Atbara to the Nile. In 1902, Britain, Egypt, and Ethiopia agreed to a treaty that regulates the flow of the Blue Nile on the same conditions, and in 1906 Britain and Belgium agreed to not reduce the flow of the tributaries to Lake Victoria and the Albert Nile. In the same year, 1906, Italy, Britain, and France agreed the flow of the Nile cannot be blocked by any country along the stream. In 1929, Britain and Sudan (then Anglo-Sudan) agreed to not interfere with the flow to Egypt, and in 1959 Egypt (now independent of Britain) and Sudan (now independent of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium) agreed to keep the flow of the Nile at then current rate; the entire low season flow of the Nile would belong to Egypt, and Sudan agreed to allow Egypt to build the Aswan High Dam.

Egypt depends totally on the Nile for water and would be a desert without it, having only a few inhabitable oases. No other permanent water source is found in Egypt, and Egypt's population hugs the narrow strip of fertile land along the Nile. Egypt has always wanted to control the sources of the river to feel secure. This has meant military invasion of Sudan from pharaonic times onward, and Egypt has been able to successfully invade and occupy Sudan numerous times in the past. The most effective occupation was begun by Muhammad 'Ali in 1821. Egypt did not stop at the Sudd barrier as it had in the past, but the Turkish sea captain, *Qapudan* Salim, broke through the labyrinth of reeds and grass in 1841. This opened up the conquest of what is now South Sudan or what was then called Equatoria to Egypt. The border between Egyptian Sudan and Uganda was finalized in 1894 with a survey by British officers, most of them in service to the

British East Africa Company, which took over management of Uganda in 1893. This brought the end of Egyptian expansion into Central Africa.

During the *Mahdiyyah* (1885–1898) in Sudan, neither the Mahdi nor his successor the *khalifah* were successful in conquering Equatoria from the governor appointed by Cairo, Emin Pasha. However, Emin Pasha was isolated in the south, and Britain felt he was in danger from the Mahdi's forces in Rejaf. The result was one of the expeditions by Henry Morton Stanley that "rescued" a somewhat confused Emin Pasha and a small number of his men; the rest of Emin's forces mutinied and stayed in Equatoria with their local families.

Egypt fell under British occupation in 1881 after an attempt by ethnic Egyptian officers to get better treatment from the Turkish and Circassian officers who dominated the officer corps. The revolt eventually flared into anti-European violence in Alexandria; the British, given a free hand by the French, bombarded Alexandria and landed troops. The British marched to meet the Egyptian forces and defeated them at Tell al-Kabir in the Nile River delta. The British induced the khedive to accept British occupation and their "help" to deal with Egypt's financial crisis. In an attempt to modernize, Egypt had spent itself into debt to European creditors and had already sold the Suez Canal to Britain to try to free herself from debt. At nearly the same time, Egypt had to deal with the religious rebellion in Sudan led by Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, part of a 19th-century Islamic revivalist movement in the Arab world.

Egypt's people were greatly anti-British, and a strong nationalism grew in the face of what Egyptians felt was humiliation at the hands of the British. Men such as Kamal Mustafa and Saad Zaghlul became spokesmen for Egyptian independence. Khedive 'Abbas II Hilmi (ruled 1892–1914) was strongly anti-British and pro-Ottoman (Egypt was still part of the Ottoman Empire). Much of their dislike was focused on the person of Sir Evelyn Baring Lord Cromer, the British consul general from 1883 to 1907. Cromer was overbearing and arrogant toward the Egyptians and actually made it harder for Egyptians to become educated by raising school fees beyond the means of the average family. The British removed 'Abbas II Hilmi and replaced him with his less nationalist uncle, Hussein Kamal, when 'Abbas refused to support the British war effort against the Turks in World War I.

The political problems between Egypt's ruling house and the British did not end with the removal of 'Abbas II Hilmi. They continued and were especially bad during the rule of King Faruq (ruled 1936–1952) when the young king clashed frequently with British High Commissioner Miles Lampson. Lampson's

disregard for Egyptian sensitivities led to the king giving up on trying to rule and led to the eventual coup by the Free Officers Movement in 1952. Extreme nationalism had several avenues for Egyptians. A secular nationalism was founded by the leaders of what became the Wafd Party in 1919. In 1921, the Islamist group the Muslim Brotherhood was founded and supported the Free Officers Movement and the military men who still ruled Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood remains an important part of Egyptian and Sudanese politics and society. In 2012, the first democratically elected president of Egypt was Muslim Brotherhood member Muhammad Morsi. Morsi was subsequently overthrown in a coup a year later. Egypt is once again under the rule of a military man, 'Abd al-Fattah Sisi, who was elected in 2014.

Egyptian comedy has always had a strong element of political criticism. Cinema and television were among the few ways to express political criticism and commentary, especially under dictatorial rule. Egyptians' sense of humor allows them as a people to turn to comedic plays and films that make jokes at the expense of those ruling the country. Comedy is much more effective than novels, which are also used by Egyptians to criticize leadership. Among the most popular of Egyptian comedians is 'Adil Imam, whose films and plays since the 1970s have been popular with the Arab masses and strongly criticize Egyptian (and Arab) leadership. Other Egyptian comedians do the same, but not with the biting wit of 'Adil Imam. His play *al-Za'im (The Ruler)* ran from 1985 to nearly the end of the 1990s. Imam never stuck to the exact script, and in the many years of the play's life his ad libis meant that people were always presented with something new. His films run from being dark such as *al-Mansy (The Forgotten)* (1993) to pure light comedy such as *al-Irahb wa al-Kabab (Terrorism and Barbeque)* (1992). He takes on not only the official leadership but also the Islamists such as in his 2016 Ramadan series *Mu'min wa Shiraka (Mu'min and Company)*. Recently, television personality Bassam Yusuf took on the Egyptian leadership with a program based on U.S. television's *The Daily Show with John Stewart* called *al-Burnamig (The Program)* in 2012. Bassam Yusuf's show was canceled in 2014 because it was classified as too dangerous to continue by the government.

In 1893, the border set between Sudan and Uganda split the populations along both sides, but a 1930 directive from the British governor of Sudan indicated that the south would be given to Uganda. Policies in Sudan differed between the north and south, and by 1910 northern Sudanese were removed by the governor's order and new policies were instituted. This meant no northern

Sudanese influence in the south, no use of Arabic, and no wearing of Arab clothes; in addition, the use of English and spread of Christian missionaries further separated the two parts of the country. Unity with Uganda did not happen, and when Sudan became independent in 1956 Sudan comprised both the Arabic-speaking and Muslim north and the English-speaking and partially Christian south. The south was totally unprepared for unity with the north, and civil war immediately began.

The north had experienced a degree of local rule under Anglo–Egyptian rule. Because the Sudanese had been exposed to Egyptian nationalism anti-British movements, they began their own unrest under the British. Arabic and Islam unified Egypt and Sudan, but the Sudanese still wanted their own independence. Concepts of a greater Arab nation were introduced, and in Sudan a strong element of Islam was part of the identity of being a Sudanese Arab. Unlike Egypt, where Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir quickly neutralized the Muslim Brotherhood, in Sudan the legacy of the Mahdi’s rebellion formed into the Ummah (National) Party and more fundamentalist political Islam became stronger. In 1990, Sudan’s President Bashir opened the country to any “Arab brother” and allowed Arab fighters from Afghanistan, including Osama bin Ladin, to make Sudan their new home.

Ethiopia was the only county of the Nile River basin that escaped European imperialism—until the Italian occupation of 1934–40. Ethiopia had been able to stay independent despite a British invasion in 1868 and an attempted Italian invasion in 1896. The British effected a “regime change” and withdrew while the Italian invasion was defeated. The Italian occupation of 1934–40 helped spur Ethiopian nationalism and eventually brought the 1974 coup that toppled the last emperor, Haile Selassie.

Uganda’s two most important kingdoms, Buganda and Bunyoro, were less lucky. In 1893, the British East Africa Company was given the right to take over the country. Buganda was able to maintain itself with the help of Protestant missionaries who interfered with the actions of the company and advocated for the rights of Africans. Nonetheless, Buganda’s king was removed and exiled by the company several different times. With the support of British missionaries, however, the dynasty was able to last even through the troubled times of Milton Obote and Idi Amin. Bunyoro was different. Bunyoro’s king never had “good press” in England and was removed and exiled. Unlike the Bugandan king, he did not have European supporters to advocate for him. Nonetheless, nearly all of the old royal families were able to survive both colonialism and the nationalism

of independence. All of Uganda's kingdoms were banned by Milton Obote in 1967 and remained so until 1993 when Yoweri Museveni allowed all four traditional kingdoms of Uganda—Bunyoro, Buganda, Busoga, and Toro—to be revived. He allowed them to have a degree of say in local matters, but they are under the laws of the state.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded in Addis Ababa by Emperor Haile Selassie in 1963 with 32 countries. It was renamed the African Union (AU) in 2001 and today has 53 member states. Morocco left the OAU because the organization recognized the Sahrawi Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), but in January 2017 it was readmitted. One of the first things the OAU agreed to was to avoid redrawing the colonial borders of member countries. This was agreed on despite the issue of ethnic groups spread over several countries and the need for newly established countries to try to build national consensus. Countries such as Egypt and Ethiopia have been “nations” for some time and have a strong sense of nationalism, but others such as Sudan and Uganda do not. Subsequent internal disputes have caused the OAU and now the AU problems of deciding whether it is right or wrong to interfere or allow a population to suffer. The first such instances were with Biafra in Nigeria when the Igbo people felt they were not being treated fairly and with northern Nigerians such as the Hausa and Fulani who felt left out of business and the economy.

The Biafra war was won by the Nigerian state, and the Igbo were not allowed independence. However, in Sudan, where the longest civil war in Africa happened, southern Sudanese were allowed in 2011 to vote for full separation and to become independent. Eritrea also seceded from Ethiopia and was allowed full independence. These actions seem contrary to the principle of retaining the original colonial borders. The Arab League and the United Nations also have some regional say in the Nile River valley, a factor that can complicate matters.

Most of the states along the Nile have not been able to benefit from the river as much as Egypt. In recent years, most of the other states have proposed modernization schemes that would need to use the Nile, but Egyptian insists that the flow of the Nile must remain the same as before because of earlier treaties. This has meant that the dams built mostly by the British in the past have allowed much of the water to flow on past other countries. Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sudan all have dams on the river, but the total flow must remain the same as in the past despite the fact that the Aswan dam can hold as many as three years' worth of water for Egypt. When Ethiopia proposed to build a dam on the Blue Nile, Egypt threatened to bomb it. For both Sudan and Egypt, the Nile is vital to their

existence, and they will not tolerate any changes in the flow of the river even if that means other countries remain economically weak. As the issue of water becomes more acute, the Nile may be the specific reason for war in northeastern Africa.

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# Culture of the Nile

The civilizations that grew up along the Nile River have long produced some of the world's greatest art and architecture. Both Egypt and Sudan's early cultures had pastoral nomadic backgrounds, with people moving closer to water as the Sahara desert grew at the end of the Neolithic period. Although they have similar origins, their development was separate and with little or no direct contact until the Old Kingdom period (3100–2181 BCE) of Egyptian history.

With such a long period of history, both Egypt and Sudan have been able to contribute great art to the world. Ethiopia has also had a long and productive history in art and architecture. Some influence from Egyptian art can be seen in church decorations and in manuscripts in Ethiopia, but Ethiopia has had centuries of contact with Yemen as well, and the cultures of the Red Sea have probably exercised even more influence on Ethiopia than did the Nile valley. Ethiopia's connection with Sudan is less easy than with the Red Sea region, and there has always been greater contact via the sea than by the river and its tributaries.

The Sudd marks the end of easy river for transportation and contact and the beginning of an entirely different set of cultures and belief systems. Here sub-Saharan African cultures predominate, and art and architecture are different. Building materials change as well from stone and mud brick to reeds and rushes bound together to make structural supports as well as woven reeds to make sidings. Architecture is equally impressive, and towns and cities have been large and spacious, although little is left of earlier settlements because they were built from perishable materials.

Several architectural styles that developed in Egypt became "national" styles. Fatamid was selected by the Coptic Church for its recent monuments, whereas Mamluk was chosen for Muslim buildings in the 19th century when the Egyptian state wanted something more local than the imperial style of the Ottoman state. An Egyptian style would set off Egypt from the rest of the Ottoman Empire and

help assert the Egyptian identity. Nonetheless, the symbol of the city of Cairo is the Ottoman-styled Muhammad 'Ali Mosque on the Citadel. In the nationalist period starting in the early 20th century, pharaonic was chosen for the tomb of the nationalist hero Saad Zaghlul, despite his request that his tomb not be in such a style. Beyond Egypt, in the 19th century, Masonic temples in Europe, the United States, and Canada began to take on decorative aspects borrowed from ancient Egyptian temples.

In addition to entries in this volume that address the specifics of ancient, Christian, and Muslim buildings, other entries discuss important museums where it is possible to see much of the art. Cairo has three such museums: the Cairo Museum, which houses pharaonic treasures; the Coptic Museum, which protects Coptic art; and the Islamic Museum, which houses treasures from across the Muslim world, although its primary purpose is to protect Egypt's Islamic heritage. During the Tahrir Square movement in the Arab Spring in 2011, the Cairo Museum was on the frontlines of the protests because it is located on the northern end of the square. After people broke in and attempted to steal objects, protesters surrounded the museum to protect it with a human chain of linked arms. It is now suspected that the breakin was done to discredit the protest movement and was perpetrated by the police or state security although most likely those actually involved in the thefts were not official members of either service. Most of the objects were placed on the black market for antiquities and have been recovered.



**The Muhammad ‘Ali Mosque was built by the Ottoman governor, Muhammad ‘Ali between 1830 and 1848. The mosque was built in Ottoman style and sports two minarets, usually reserved for mosques built by the Sultan himself. ([Sculpties/Dreamstime.com](https://www.sculpties.com/dreamstime.com))**

In addition to art and architecture, the region produces some of the Arab world’s best literature and Egypt, because of the numbers of educated elite who can afford own publishing companies and to buy books, has been the home of a good many Arab authors. Egypt and Lebanon are the publishing locations in the Arab world and authors from other Arab states send their manuscripts to Cairo or Beirut for publication. This encyclopedia includes entries on some to the best known Arab authors of the modern era: Najib Mahfuz, Taha Hussein, and Tawfiq al-Hakim. They are known outside of the Arab world as well. However, they are just a few of the Egyptian authors who are famous in the Arab world. Other well-known authors include Yayha Haqqi, Yusuf al-Qa‘id, Ihsan ‘Abd al-Qaddus, Ahmad Shawki, Yusuf Idris, Nawal al-Sa’adawi, and ‘Ala’ al-Aswany. The authors chosen for inclusion have been groundbreaking for their fictional novels, short stories, and plays. The American University in Cairo Press has published English translations of many of their works, and they are easily found in most public and school libraries. Other countries along the Nile also have accomplished authors, and the works of Sudan’s Tayib Salih—*Season of Migration to the North* and *Wedding of Zayn*—are readily found in libraries or

may be assigned as class readings in some university courses.

Ethiopia has a long history of literary production, and many of these works are available as well. Ethiopian authors include Hama Tuma, Sahle Sellaissie, Haddis Alemahayu, and Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin; many of their works are also available in English translation in public or school libraries. Less known are authors from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Although many of them write in English, access to their publications is harder because of constraints on African authors to distribute their works outside their home countries and the cost of publication. Libraries should have collections of African authors. Although the most famous Egyptian authors have a large area of readership (the Middle East and the Arab world), many of the other states along the Nile have less distribution and are therefore less “famous.”

Much of what holds for literature also holds for cinema. Egypt is the Arab world’s leading producer of both full-length feature films as well as TV series. Egypt’s film industry emerged when film emerged in the United States and Europe. Unlike most of the rest of the Arab world, Egypt had a population that was wealthy enough to consume films. In the first decades of the 20th century, the Egyptian elite saw film as a way to promote nationalism and independence—to be anti-British—and banker Tala‘at Harb invested in the film industry separately and independently of the British regime in the country. The then king of Egypt, Faruq, was pleased; although he did not personally lend financial support to the film industry, he encouraged Egypt’s own productions. Egypt’s film industry was important enough to be a competitor with Hollywood when German Jews were seeking safe haven from the Nazis in the early 1930s; several major directors such as Fritz Kramp went to Egypt.

Aspiring film stars and singers flocked to Cairo from other Arab states, especially from Syria and Lebanon. The one entry on cinema in this encyclopedia is that for actor Yusuf Wahbi Bey; he helped raise the standards of Arabic-language film from comical farce to true drama. He was important for starting the “golden years” of Egypt’s cinema before Nasserist socialist realism came to dominate. Today Egypt is losing its primary place to other Arab states, but because of the widespread appeal of Egyptian films and TV series, the Egyptian dialect is the most widespread and understood of all Arabic dialects.

In addition to literature and cinema, the Nile River valley has also contributed to music since the time of the pharaohs. Both Egypt and Sudan have distinctive musical traditions within the general traditions of Arab and Islamic culture. Egypt’s ancient music is preserved in the music of the Coptic Church, and the

Coptic Church of Ethiopia preserves what Ethiopians claim to be their Solomonic heritage. In Egypt, Arabic music reaches the high standards of classical format in both epic poetry and melodic line. In fact, Cairo is one of the main centers of classical Arabic music. One entry in this encyclopedia is on the great female artist Umm Kulthum. She was able to produce in her audiences a state of ecstasy or *tarab* that few artists can match. Her monthly concerts were sold out, with fans coming from throughout the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia. Whereas Umm Kulthum devoted most of her work to classical music, ‘Abd al-Halim Hafiz, also included in this book, was the heartthrob of young women. His songs in a more popular vein were sung to his smooth voice, similar to the young Frank Sinatra. Both artists were greatly admired by their audiences and their funerals were immense. Umm Kulthum’s funeral brought over 1 million mourners, and several young women committed suicide on the grave of ‘Abd al-Halim. Both singers died in the 1970s but their music remains among the most popular in the Middle East and beyond. Their importance is why they are included in this volume.

Egypt remains one of the most important sources of music in the Arab world. In the 1980s, a new form began called *jill* (or young generation’s music). *Jill* was a rejection of the more formal, Ottoman-court musical style that dominated the Arab world, even in popular music before the 1980s. *Jill* musicians drew on the folk music of Egyptian peasants—simpler tunes, less instrumentation, and fewer formal words. Such singers as Muhammad Mounir, Hamid al-Sha‘iri, Mustafa Qamar, and Amir Diab exemplify *jill* music. In more recent times, rap has gained popularity with Egyptian youth, and singers such as Karim ‘Issa, Sha‘aban ‘Abd al-Rahim, Ahmad Amin, and Maryam Mahmud are now well known both inside and outside Egypt.

Sudan’s musical traditions are an interesting combination of Ethiopian style with strong Arabic influences. Instruments are shared among the cultures of Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula. Because they share the Red Sea, these peoples have exchanged as much art and culture along the Red Sea coast as they have along the Nile River valley. In addition, Sudan and Eritrea share specific ethnic peoples such as the Beja. Trade across the Red Sea to the peninsula has also contributed to an exchange of musical instruments and singing styles. Ethiopia exercises a good deal of influence, especially in the Sudanese singing style of singers such as Kamal Tarbas.

Egypt is home to one of the Islamic world’s great learning institutions, al-Azhar University, which has produced a large number of religious scholars. Al-

Azhar was founded in 970 by the Fatamids to train scholars and missionaries of Isma‘ili (Sevener) Shi‘ism. When Egypt fell to the Sunni Ayyubids, the university began teaching Sunni’s four schools of jurisprudence. Egypt has a long history of supporting institutions of higher learning from the temple schools of the Pharaonic period to the classical Hellenistic academies of the era following Alexander the Great. Egypt always has had an educated elite class who supported writers, musicians, and actors. Egypt’s legendary wealth was the reason it could have an educated elite class supported by the labor of the peasants.

In the modern era, Muhammad ‘Ali of Egypt sent young men to Europe for education and expected them to return home with the knowledge they learned abroad. Muhammad ‘Ali encouraged modern, secular education for his officer corps and wanted to build a strong, modern country with them. Egypt began publishing newspapers and journals. In 1875, *al-Ahram* (*The Pyramids*) newspaper began publication. In 1892, the first journal for women began its publishing in Alexandria—*al-Fatat* (*The Young Girl*). Such publications in Arabic helped grow the Arab nationalist feelings that would soon face European imperialism. As in cinema, these publications served as places for Arab nationalists to express their anti-British feelings and, for a time, their pro-Ottoman sentiments. Following World War I, Arab nationalist feelings ran high, as did the disgust with European imperialism in Egypt and the Levant.

Egypt became the home for journalists from Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, and several major periodicals such as the Syrian Rashid Rida’s *al-Manar* spread *Salafi* Islamic ideology, the idea that the early Islamic community served as the best example and could solve all modern problems if imitated throughout much of the Arab world. Such journals found favor with the Muslim readership as it expressed frustration with European imperialism and a general desire for a just Islamic state. *Salafi* ideas developed into the far less open, inclusive jihadist ideas of today, but their roots are in the late 19th-and early 20th-century *Salafi* ideas. These ideas were to restore the golden age of the Arabs and Islam, a period that was wide open to the outside, by going back to the original Islam of their ancestors. Rashid Rida printed articles that today sound much more open and inclusive than the rhetoric of jihadist groups. Even the Egyptian *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (Muslim Brotherhood) was once a much more nationalist group but over the years it has become less tolerant. Christians preexisted Muslims in Egypt, Sudan, and the rest of the Arab world, and *Salafi* ideas originally included them as citizens of the same nation. Many Christians were among the

nationalists, and their contribution was important to the final liberation of the Arab world from European colonialism. In Egypt, the more secular branch of nationalism as seen in the army has remained control from al-Nasir to al-Sisi, with a brief period of the Muslim Brotherhood under Muhammad Morsi as almost a hiccup. Sudan, on the other hand, has seen the power of the *Salafists* grow, and today they hold the country.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Christian missionaries brought education in English and set the course for the eventual separation of Sudan and South Sudan. Although the issue of South Sudan's secession seems to be more a political issue than one of culture, the cultural incompatibility of the two populations was crucial. For Muslims, the southern Sudanese were not at the same level of cultural development and presented problems of "race," religion, and language. Few southern Sudanese converted to Islam, and most of those who did were Dinka living in the disputed Abyei region. They had long contact with Arabs, and the region was not part of the area set aside by the British as non-Arab and non-Muslim. Following Sudan's independence in 1956, Juba Arabic, the trading lingua franca, became the language of the south. Today, after the separation of South Sudan, there has been an effort to make Swahili the accepted language, although no one in the south speaks Swahili as a first language. Historically, Swahili is a language of Kenya, Tanzania, and the Indian Ocean coastal communities, not of Sudan. Juba Arabic seems to be a more "natural" choice being composed of Sudanese Arabic and local languages such as Bari. The impact of such a choice is not known. Swahili has a large corpus of literary works in both Arabic and Latin script, but it deals with Swahili culture and history, which are alien to South Sudan.

The countries of the Nile River basin have made long and extensive contributions to the arts not only for Africa but also for the world. Many people are well aware of the contributions by Egypt, both ancient and modern, but many are surprised at the amount of art and architecture from the other Nile basin countries. Their contributions continue to be made in all fields, including literature, film, architecture, and fine arts.

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**Legends about the Nile** The Nile River valley has produced a large number of legends that are held by the peoples living along its banks of as well as many others. Some legends were invented to explain things that were unknown, whereas others were invented to help build public support for imperial expansion. Ancient Egypt was a mystery before the second half of the 19th century, and this helped perpetuate legends. Because of the large number of legends about the Nile and the peoples and cultures found along its banks, this essay will begin in Egypt and proceed up the river to its sources.

Many early European Christian pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land also visited Egypt, and for them the pyramids of Giza were the grain silos of Joseph in the Old Testament. This was one among many legends that grew out of ancient Egypt. Others were that the pyramids and the major monuments were built by Hebrew slaves at the time of Moses. These legends are easy to understand but are not based on any investigation but on summary conclusions based on ignorance. In the early Islamic period, it was thought the pyramids of Giza were great storehouses of wealth. The 'Abbasid Caliph Ma'amun (ruled 813–833 CE) had an entrance dug into the side of the Pyramid of Cheops

because of the legend it harbored great treasure; none was found. In more recent times, the pyramids—in particular, the three on the Giza plateau—have been linked to belief in extraterrestrial life forms because the structures were built at a time when the Egyptians seemed not to have the technology to build them. Believers argue that the perfect alignment of the pyramids along the four principal directions, their neat lines, and their astronomical alignments meant no human from so early a period in time could have built them. This belief ignores the long history of royal tombs before the pyramid period and instead picks up the idea that elements of Egyptian cosmology and astronomy are events the human eye cannot see. In popular American culture, the film *Stargate* (1994) and the subsequent TV series of the same name (1997–2007) perpetuated the legend of ancient astronauts.

The need to “prove” the Bible caused the birth of biblical archaeology, but the archaeological proof of the Hebrew sojourn in Egypt has yet to be discovered. Nonetheless, Hollywood has played a role in keeping the legends alive. In 1954, the film *The Valley of the Kings* was released by MGM Studios. Filmed in Egypt, it starred popular Hollywood actors of the time, including Eleanor Parker and Robert Taylor, and Egyptian actors Samia Gamal and Rushdi Abaza. It told the story of an archaeologist’s daughter (Eleanor Parker) attempting to find the tomb of Joseph in Egypt with the help of another archaeologist (Robert Taylor). They placed Joseph in the 18th Dynasty (1550–1295 BCE). Hollywood has made several movies about Moses, including the animated *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) and the longtime favorite *The Ten Commandments* (1956). Still, as of today, no archaeological evidence has supported the biblical tale of Exodus. Believed by many Jews, Christians, and Muslims to be totally true, their only “proof” is divine scripture.

Perhaps the most enduring of the legends is that of a living mummy and the curse of the pharaoh. Both are supposedly deadly to archaeologists who disturb the dead. Tales of living mummies began in the New Kingdom period (1550–1070 BCE) when the story of “Santi-Khamose and the Magician” (also called “Khaemwaset and the Mummies”) was popular. In the story, Prince Santi-Khamose or Khaemwaset wants to find the Scroll of Thoth, which has been buried in the tomb of another prince, Neferkaptah. When Santi-Khamose discovers the tomb, he disturbs the mummies of Neferkaptah and his wife and children. He plays a series of board games with Neferkaptah and eventually wins all of the games and the scroll. However, once he has the scroll, the mummy of Neferkaptah warns him that it will only bring him disaster. Santi-Khamose

returns to Memphis but becomes involved with a woman who demands his wealth and that of all of his family in return for sexual favors. To fulfill his needs, he kills his brother, nephews, and nieces but is discovered. He confesses all to the pharaoh, who tells him the scroll is the cause of his troubles and to return it to the tomb, which he does. As he exits the tomb, a severe sandstorm covers the entrance for all time. Such tales from ancient Egypt were partially preserved in the books of Herodotus and in *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*.

In the 19th century, fiction novels of travel and horror became popular, and Egypt's mysterious ruins and strange artifacts produced many new twists on these old stories. Among the first was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote *The Ring of Thoth* (1890) about a mummy that is brought to life. In the early 20th century, the West was struck with "Egyptomania," especially after the tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered in 1922. Soon tales of a curse on the tomb began to circulate, fueled by the deaths over the next eight years of 11 people who were at the opening, including the expedition's leader, Howard Carter, and the financier, Lord Carnarvon, both in 1923. Mummies also began to be portrayed in film, and in 1932 perhaps the best of the mummy movies was made, *The Mummy*, starring Boris Karloff as the mummy of Imhotep. Boris Karloff's Imhotep is a tragic figure, and audiences feel sympathy for him; however, in later mummy films, the mummy now called *Kharis* becomes a monster whose only purpose is to kill. In the 1999 remake of *The Mummy*, Imhotep is returned but portrayed as generally evil instead of being a sympathetic figure. The plot concerns the death of the pharaoh, who is killed by his fiancé Ankh-Su-Namun, who is in love with the priest Imhotep. In the 1932 film, the female lead has the same name, Ankh Es-en-Amon. In both versions, the inspiration for the female character comes from the name of Tutankhamun's wife, Ankh Es-en-Amen.

In the Byzantine and Christian period, stories of the holy family's flight to Egypt were important for the Copts, and locations of places where they stopped to rest or live were identified. In Matariyyah, a neighborhood in Cairo's Heliopolis, the Virgin's Tree stands. According to the legend, the tree is where the holy family stopped to rest and the Virgin fed the infant Jesus. The tree is a sycamore, a tree sacred to several female goddesses in ancient Egypt. The tree afforded the holy family security from bandits by opening its bark to protect them. Since the fourth century CE, the site has attracted large numbers of pilgrims who chip off bits of bark and bring back pieces of the balsam that grows in the spring at the foot of the tree used to make holy oil to anoint priests.

Cairo's southern neighborhood of Ma'adi has a site where the holy family first reached the Nile and stayed in a house, which is now a church. However, because Alexandria had a large Jewish community, it is thought the family went to live in Alexandria and did not stay in the Roman fort of Babylon (from the original Pi-Hapi-n-On or the home of the god Hapi, the god of the Nile). Little is said about their stay in Egypt in the New Testament, so it is not known where they went or lived. This has given Christians license to create legends about it. Another church in Coptic Cairo (inside the walls of the Roman fort) is identified as the place where they hid in a cave, the Church of Abu Sarga or St. Sergius. Even Muslim Egyptians are proud of their country's role in saving the holy family, and many houses have written above the door the Koranic passage about the flight to Egypt, "Enter her [Egypt] twice safe."



**The Church of Abu Serga or of Sergius and Bacchus was built over the cave where the Holy Family (Joseph, Mary, and Jesus) first sought refuge in Egypt. All Egyptians, Muslims and Christians, are proud of the fact the Holy Family sought refuge from the persecutions of Herod in Egypt. (Evgeniy Fesenko/Dreamstime.com)** Tales of ancient Egyptian expeditions deep into Africa inspired both fiction writers and explorers. Legends of still existing Egyptian civilizations in a lost oasis or in a lost city in the jungle inspired British writer Henry Rider Haggard in the late 19th century to write two of the most widely read boys' adventure books ever: *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (first published as a series between 1886 and 1887). Both books are among the highest-selling boys' adventure books with more than 100 million copies sold in 44 languages. Films have also been made of both stories and the subsequent

adventure called *Ayesha* was serialized in a journal between 1904 and 1905. The main character of *King Solomon's Mines*, Alan Quartermain, served as the model for Indiana Jones. In a subsequent novel called *Alan Quartermain*, the plot involves his expedition's journey to the land of the white-skinned Zu-Vendi, who seem to be of Egyptian origin.

Nineteenth-century explorers and imperial agents found it impossible to believe that the Bantu Africans were capable of civilization without outside help. Arab influence along the coast and up the Nile were evident to them, but pre-Arab penetration into the heart of Africa could only be by the “advanced” Egyptians or Phoenicians in the pay of King Solomon, who was said to have owned mines in Africa. In Haggard's book, the more advanced civilizations were the result of foreign colonies among the Bantu—Phoenician in *King Solomon's Mines* and Arab in *She*. The 1995 Hollywood film *Congo* also built on the legend that King Solomon owned a diamond mine in the Virunga region near the split in the drainage basins between the Nile and Congo Rivers. The Egyptian penetration of central Africa in ancient times was first presented for the origin of the Tutsi by John Hanning Speke. His supposition was backed up by the local tale that the Tutsis came from the north; using his power of observation, Speke noted Tutsis were taller and lighter skinned than the Bantu Hutu and therefore must have been of Caucasian (ancient Egyptian) origin. This legend, produced by a European, was carried by other European explorers and Christian missionaries and led to the eventual modern ethnic division of the Tutsi and Hutu into the states of Rwanda and Burundi. Everyone ignored the economic side of the division between Tutsi (cattle owner) and Hutu (farmer) and the fact it was possible to move from one “ethnicity”—in reality one economic class—to the other because economic circumstances and that Tutsi women married Hutu men and their children were Hutu. Tutsi and Hutu speak the same language as well, making the differences between them difficult to define.

Other African populations are seen as connected to ancient Egypt, some by their own tales of origin or by Europeans. The Dogon of Mali have a similar regard for the rise of Sirius or the Dog Star as the ancient Egyptians, and this has fueled speculation of a connection. The Dogon do not claim Egyptian or extraterrestrial origin, but certain other people in Africa such as the Yoruba of Nigeria do claim Arab or Egyptian origins with elaborate epic tales of the journey from Egypt to their current home.

Islam added important legends to the large corpus of tales about the Nile. One maintains that some of the ancient Egyptian practices from their festival of Opet

are found in the Upper Egyptian city of Luxor. Opet celebrated the rebirth of the pharaoh, and at Thebes (modern Luxor) statues of the gods Amun, Mut, and Khonsu were taken in decorated barges from their precinct in Thebes to Karnak and back again. During the festival, people cross-dressed and behaved wantonly. Today, for a five-day period in Luxor culminating on the 15th of Sha‘aban (the month before Ramadan), people celebrate a *mawlid* (birthday) of the Muslim saint who converted Luxor to Islam: Shaykh Yusuf ibn Muhammad Abu Hajjaj al-Balawi. Abu Hajjaj lived from 1134 to 1207 CE, long after the area had converted to Islam, but nonetheless his legend says that when he arrived Luxor was ruled by a pagan queen. She was a fierce amazon-like figure, but Abu Hajjaj defeated her in battle; she then submitted to Islam and eventually married him. His mosque sits in the middle of the Luxor temple, and each year the local people cross-dress and carry a decorated boat around the temple to celebrate Islam’s paramount position. The symbolism has changed from pre-Islamic to Islamic; for example, the boat now represents one of the means of transportation that pilgrims to Mecca used to take from Red Sea ports, and supposedly Abu Hajjaj organized such fleets to take pilgrims to Mecca. Nonetheless the *mawlid* of Abu Hajjaj connects contemporary practice to ancient practice in Luxor. The celebration has become so well known that the ministry of tourism puts on a recreation of it for tourists every November 4.

For the people of Luxor and surrounding villages, the ruins exercise a great deal of power, and stories have grown up around them. In ancient times, the Colossi of Memnon were so named because the northern statue of Amenotep III sang at sunrise. The sound of it reminded the Greeks of the song of greeting that Memnon sang for his mother, Eos, the goddess of the dawn. When visiting the site in 199 CE, Roman Emperor Septimus Severus repaired the statues and the singing stopped. Some of the ruins such as Madinat al-Habu are used in local practices of magic. It once had a small lake where children could be taken at night to complete the preparation of charms for them to wear and to protect them against the evil eye. The Temple of Mut has a statue of the goddess Sekhmet that had to be removed because local villagers thought it brought evil to them. They tried to damage it to keep it from being able to “work” its magic; because of that, the ministry in charge of the site removed it to prevent further damage.

Several legends grew up around General Charles Gordon and the Mahdi in Sudan. Because the Mahdi died only a few months after Gordon was killed, the fates of the two men were linked. The Mahdi had ordered Gordon to be taken alive, but in the heat of the battle Gordon was killed. For the Victorian British,

his death had to be heroic. Gordon was pictured in the British press as stepping forward at the top of the stairs of the governor's house in Khartoum armed only with a walking stick. As Gordon began to move forward, the legend says the Sudanese began to walk back down the steps until a warrior killed him with a spear. Gordon's head was brought to the Mahdi, who was reportedly horrified by it and refused to look at it. Another such story says that *Khalifah* 'Abdallah al-Ta'aishi held his forces in Omdurman to attack the British at Kerreri Hills, where a dream foretold of a British defeat. Historians have speculated that had the Sudanese forces attacked in force much earlier while the British were farther down the river, the British may not have won.

Many of Ethiopia's legends are related to the claim of Solomonic descent of Ethiopian kings (and the Coptic faith) through the child born of the Queen of Sheba, Makada (Bilkis in Ethiopian and Bilqis in the Islamic version). The stories of the wealth she brought in spices, incense, and precious stones helped spark the legends of King Solomon's mines somewhere in Central Africa. According to Ethiopians, Makada bore Solomon a son, Menelik I, who returned to Ethiopia with the original Ark of the Covenant, which had been stolen from the temple in Jerusalem. The ark was housed on an island in Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile, before being taken to the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in the city of Aksum, where it is believed to be today. The site is so holy that the general public is not allowed to approach the building. Only anointed priests can approach and enter the building, and even fewer are allowed to actually see the ark. Christianity came early to Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian king converted the same year as Constantine, the first Roman emperor to accept Christianity, according to Ethiopian history. With the arrival of Islam, Christian kingdoms of Sudan and Ethiopia were cut off from the rest of the Christian world, but a vague knowledge of their existence began the legends of Prester John, the good Christian king in Africa or Asia. Prester John was seen to be a descendant of one of the magi who ruled over a Nestorian Christian land surrounded by Muslims and pagans. Thought to be in India, eventually, Western Christians came to see the Ethiopian king as Prester John, especially after the Portuguese were able to explore the Indian Ocean.

The last legends this essay addresses are those of cannibals in Africa. Several Bantu peoples in South Sudan had reputations for cannibalism such as the Mangubetu and the Azande, who were also called the Niam Niam by 19th-century explorers. Niam Niam (or Nyam Nyam) is the Dinka word for the Azande and is supposed to indicate the sound they make while eating human

flesh. As with most 19th-century tales of African people, there is little hard evidence to support claims of cannibalism, although currently the Mangubetu believe their ancestors were cannibals. It seems that even if they ate human flesh on occasion, it was a rare occurrence and only in the aftermath of the Swahili slave raids in the 1880s that caused great disruption economically and politically. British explorer James Jameson, a member of one of Henry Morton Stanley's expeditions, bought an 11-year-old girl and gave her to the Azande to watch how they dissected and cooked a human. He fully documented the event in a series of detailed drawings. Stanley was furious when told of this, but by the time he was informed Jameson had already died of a fever. Victorian accounts of African brutality were often to cover up their own brutal behavior and present to European readers the superiority of Europeans over non-European peoples.

Legends often are more enduring than reality. Legends that have grown up along the Nile remain current and continue to inspire writers and filmmakers. Authors such as Christian Jacq continue to find something new to say about ancient Egypt. Films about mummies are also still being made. Written in French, Jacq's books have been translated into numerous languages and are often best-seller lists. Legends that purport Arab or Egyptian penetration into the African interior also inspire authors and film writers and still find an eager audience even when such legends have proven to be false. An example of the popularity of these stories is the 1995 film *Congo* based on the 1980 novel of the same name by Michael Crichton.

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# Environmental Issues of the Nile

The Nile River is a long body of water that flows from or through 10 different countries. Many of them depend on the Nile as their major or only source of drinking water, water for irrigation, water for transportation, and water to power hydroelectric plants to meet the needs of modernization projects. The Nile is the only source of water for two of the largest countries by population: Egypt (with more than 93 million citizens) and Sudan (with more than 40 million) based on United Nations estimates for 2016. Ethiopia's estimated population is more than 100 million, but the Nile and its sources in Ethiopia are not the country's only sources of water. South Sudan's population is nearly 13 million and is not totally dependent on the Nile and its tributaries because the climate is not arid and there is sufficient rainfall as well. Aswan in southern Egypt can go as long as 10 years with no rainfall, so for Egypt the country would die without the Nile. Egypt and Sudan are 100-percent dependent on the Nile and therefore need to control or manage the amount of water they receive. This has resulted in Egyptian military invasions in the past and threats of military action today.

Most of the countries of the Nile have high birthrates: more than 3 percent a year, which is considered to be a so-called Third World rate. The Nile and its tributaries are used as important sources of drinking water, but issues of pollution are today threatening their survival. With massive population growth, valuable farmlands are being lost to urban expansion, which is a particular problem in Egypt. Under al-Nasir, the state provided housing for the poor and middle class under controlled conditions; following his death in 1970, the Sadat, the Mubarak, and now the Sisi governments have turned housing over to the private sector. The private sector has come up with two main models: gated communities for the upper middle class and what Egyptians call '*Ashawiyat*' for the poor. '*Ashawiyat*' neighborhoods are often illegal and built without connections to public water, sewage, or electricity services. They are built with no concern about transportation and are often unhealthy, with narrow unpaved

roads and no easy access to emergency services. The apartment blocks are tall and built of brick, and the apartments are small. They are built to hold the maximum number of people and look unstable, and some occasionally collapse because of the weight of the number of people living in them. People begin living in them without water and sewage, and untreated sewage runs in the dirt streets. There is no refuse collection, and the streets fill with rotting garbage. This would be a massive health issue if the climate was more humid and desiccation of organic material took longer. Eventually, government services catch up with the '*Ashawiyat*' long after people are living there (the usual lag is 20 years), and then water, sewage, electricity, and garbage collection are extended. However, because they are often illegal having been built on zoned agricultural land or too near archaeological sites, they can be bulldozed by the government until the contractor pays the fine for building in a nonresidential area. Egypt does have fairly strict building codes but since al-Nasir's time they tend to be ignored. Sadat allowed building a night club next to the Giza pyramids, and the Giza plateau was also threatened by a ring road (actually a highway) under Mubarak. Although Sadat had to back down and the night club was removed, the ring road was built despite protests from archaeologists and the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.



**This village in the Delta shows the unofficial housing common in Egypt called ‘*Ashawiyat*. (Markus Schieder/[Dreamstime.com](#))**

Many of the environmental issues are related to economic development in the

countries of the Nile. Overgrazing and overfarming in the nations at the source of the river cause soil erosion and subsequent pollution of the water by soil runoff into the stream. Farther down the Nile in Sudan and Egypt, the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides also pollute the water; as a result, Egypt is now in a crisis of drinkable water. The amount of pollutants in the water also affects wildlife, and certain fish types once common in the river all the way to the coast are now found only above the Aswan High Dam. Pollutants not only include runoff from agriculture but also untreated human and industrial waste. None of the countries along the course of the Nile have strong environmental laws or even public-awareness campaigns. Egypt has the largest number of awareness campaigns (nearly every year a new campaign runs on television) because it is so dependent on the river, but even there cultural attitudes about water make public-awareness campaigns fall flat. Water is locally seen as a cleaning agent, and by the very fact that it is water it is by definition clean. Women in Egyptian villages wash their families' clothes, dishes, children, animals, and even vegetables for food in the same water where garbage, industrial, human, and agricultural waste has been thrown away to wash out to sea. In villages, garbage is thrown into canals and the river, and people think that simply because it is in the water it is cleaned of pollutants. Costs of treating polluted water are high, and none of the countries of the Nile Basin area can afford to buy the needed equipment.

Some of the environmental damage in the lower Nile River valley and delta are caused by the Aswan High Dam. The dam was successful in achieving its primary objectives, but much of its success was already lost by the time it was finished. Egypt's farmers can no longer depend on the silt left behind by the annual flood—silt that made Egypt one of the most fertile places in the world. Chemical fertilizers have been pushed by the ministry of agriculture that cause the topsoil to harden. In addition, fields are irrigated all year long, and even though Egypt constantly produces food the salts from irrigation waters are making fields less productive; some have even become salt flats.

The loss of the Nile flood has also allowed the Mediterranean Sea to intrude inland. Areas that were renewed yearly with new soils are no longer able to resist the wave action of the sea. This has meant that the shallow lakes and lagoons along the delta's shoreline are being washed into the sea. Delicate natural areas used by migrating birds and certain types of fish have been lost, which also leads to losses in local incomes. In addition, fresh groundwater is being pumped out for drinking and irrigation purposes—and being replaced by

seawater. Alexandria, for example, always had an issue with freshwater; even in Ptolemaic times, local wells were brackish but drinkable. Alexandria is not connected to the Nile except by a canal, but the canal no longer provides clean drinking water and the local water table is becoming saltier. With climate change, the seashore is eroding—in as much as 100 yards (91 meters) a year in some places. With the rise in sea levels caused by global warming, the delta is turning into a salty marsh with seawater penetrating the groundwater and making large areas in the northern sectors of the delta unusable for agriculture. Authorities predict that without emergency measures, cities such as Alexandria and Rashid will be flooded and more than 77 square miles (200 square kilometers) of land will be underwater by 2025.

Expansion of agricultural lands in Egypt, Sudan, and Uganda caused the current water crisis. In Uganda, an international team of scientists is working to find plant types that use less water and also trying to better understand how livestock such as cattle can deal with less water. Cattle are high consumers of water. Although they can survive with polluted water, they will pass on chemical and harmful microbes to humans in their milk and meat. Polluted water includes not only waste runoff but also too suspended soil in the water. Many fish varieties cannot live in water that contains too much silt. The amounts of pollutants in the water reduce the amount of oxygen available and can cause the fish to not breed or to die. With many of the people along the banks of the river and its sources reliant on fish, any reduction in the quantity of fish directly affects local economics.

The Nile is home to an intrusive species of plant called the *water hyacinth* (*Eichhornia crassipes*), which was originally from the Amazon. It was brought by the British for botanical gardens in the 1890s but “escaped” into the river in 1956. Only two years later, it had spread to nearly the entire length of the White Nile, across the Sudd, up the Bahr al-Ghazel, and to the Bahr el-Jabal. It already was causing disruption in water transportation and fishing. The species grows at an alarming rate, and today the entire length of the river suffers from this botanical plague. At great expense, Egypt clears the river and the canals of this plant once a year with a massive cleaning operation that uses large mechanical scoops to remove it from the water. Without such an operation, the plant would completely block the flow of the river.

The water hyacinth’s reproduction rate is alarming: one plant produces 3,000 new plants in 50 days. It is highly resistant as well able to grow in nearly every condition and without any sustenance. It has no local predators and can survive

even being blown up. If only a small bit of it is not destroyed, it can regrow. It is threatening local plant life, and even fish cannot live among its stalks and roots. Native plants such as the lotus have been starved out by the hyacinth. Several natural agents can be used against the plant, but introducing weevils or other insects to kill the plant can prove more dangerous than the plant itself. In Southeast Asia, it is used to feed pigs, but few countries along the Nile raise pigs because they are predominantly Muslim. The only solution seems to be what the countries are already doing: clearing the water passages when the plant builds up and becomes a problem transportation or blocks the flow of the Nile.

The environmental issues along the Nile will require international solutions. Global warming will need to be reduced or reversed to save the Nile delta from becoming part of the Mediterranean Sea or a large saltwater marsh. Problems caused by the Aswan High Dam will require inventive engineering to solve, and issues such as the invasion of the Amazonian water hyacinth will need measures that can kill it without endangering indigenous plant and animal species. Every country along the Nile will need to cooperate in several ways to find lasting solutions.

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## **Controversies of the Nile**

Many controversies have surrounded countries along the Nile and its tributaries. Since the 1929 regional agreement about Egypt's yearly water allotment, most of the other countries, particularly Uganda and Ethiopia, have wanted to renegotiate the treaty. They are allowed to build dams on their tributaries and on the Nile, but these cannot disturb the yearly flow into Egypt. This is seen as unfair now that the Aswan High Dam holds three years' worth of water for Egypt, but Egypt has remained unmoved. Current plans to build the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile River have provoked both Sudan and Egypt. Egypt is concerned that the dam will greatly reduce the annual flood; even though Egypt now receives 66 percent of the flow of the Nile, it is demanding an increased share to 90 percent. Egypt has warned Ethiopia that if plans continue to build the dam, Egypt will send aircraft to bomb the site.

In 2007, Uganda began building a second dam on the Victoria Nile because the old one completed in 1954 was beginning to leak. A site farther down the Nile at Bugajali was selected and will most likely cover the first one at Owens Falls or Nalubaale with water. The dam was completed in 2012 and will meet many of the energy needs of both Uganda and Kenya. Egypt did not object because the total amount of water the dam releases is equal to the total as calculated in 1929. Nonetheless, Uganda and Kenya, the countries that benefit from the electricity generated by the dam, complained that the colonial-era treaty does not properly compensate them for allowing so much of the water to be released.

In 1999, the Nile Basin Initiative was launched by the water ministers of nine countries along the Nile: Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo. Eritrea was an observer. The initiative sought to find mutually agreeable solutions for the use of the Nile from its sources to its delta. In 2010, five of the countries signed the cooperative framework agreement: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Rwanda. In 2011, Burundi

signed. Congo has not signed yet but is expected to. Sudan and Egypt strongly object to the wording of the document and will not sign. How South Sudan will deal with the issue is not known. The country did not exist when the original agreement was made in 1999, and South Sudan's problems are deeper and more fundamental than dealing with water issues. However, its attitude toward the Jonglei Canal is not favorable for the canal's completion, and the current government seems to have a fairly strong naturalist or conservationist approach. Nonetheless, the Nile Basin Initiative has provided programs for developing local fisheries, especially in Uganda, as well as better management schemes for all nine signatory countries.

In the 19th century, the debate over the discovery of the Nile's source provoked considerable controversy. The first expedition was led by Sir Richard Francis Burton between 1857 and 1858. Burton tended to think Lake Tanganyika was among a set of lakes that fed the Nile, but a young member of Burton's team, John Hanning Speke, explored another, more northern lake that he called Lake Victoria. Even though Speke was sure the Nile sprang from it, he had not seen a river leave the lake, had not traveled around its shore, and did not speak any local language. Burton, who had been too ill to go with Speke, doubted the younger man's decision to declare Lake Victoria the source. Having lost or broken all of their surveying equipment, Speke could not provide necessary documentation to prove that Victoria was the larger and higher of the lakes.

Burton and Speke ended up with a bitter rivalry over the source or sources of the Nile. Speke was funded by the Royal Geographical Society to return and verify that Victoria was the source in 1860. He was accompanied by James Augustus Grant, and the two men's expedition was fraught with problems. Greedy local rulers continuously demanded more and better gifts, and sickness left Grant unable to walk for months. Speke once again did not go around the lake, but in 1861 he did visit the place where the Nile exits the lake at Owens Falls. Grant was still unable to walk, and only Speke could verify his claim of "discovering" the source. The two men were treated well by King Mutesa I of Buganda but were poorly treated by King Kumrasi of Bunyoro. They were unable to follow the complete course of the river and totally missed Lake Albert, but this part was visited by Samuel and Florence Baker in 1864.

On Speke and Grant's return to England, doubts about the Nile's source were still voiced by Burton and others. Even David Livingstone thought that Lake Tanganyika was a source. Speke died following a tragic hunting accident on the eve of what would have been the great debate over the Nile with Burton that was



sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society. The historical novel *Burton and Speke* (1982) was made into a movie *Mountains of the Moon* (1989) and tells the story of the rivalry between the two men, Burton and Speke, over the discovery of the source of the Nile. Proof of Speke's claim would fall to another Victorian explorer, Henry Morton Stanley. Stanley helped Livingstone prove that Lake Tanganyika did not flow into Lake Victoria in 1871. Stanley's second expedition in 1875–76 proved that Speke was correct. Stanley mapped the Congo River from its mouth inland and circumnavigated Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria, proving that Victoria has only one river draining from it—the same river Speke “discovered” in 1862. Twelve years after Speke's first sighting of the Owens Falls and what is now called the Victoria Nile, the controversy over the source of the Nile was over. Even today, however, springs in Burundi and Rwanda are being found that continue to add to the length of the river.

In 2011, the Arab Spring rolled into Egypt, pitting its ruler, Husni Mubarak, against the people. The Tahrir Square movement ultimately brought an end to Mubarak's 30-year rule, and he resigned on February 11, 2011. Briefly, it seemed Egypt had freed itself from military rule and democratic civilian elections finally arrived. In June 2012, the people elected a controversial Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Muhammad Morsi—but only a third of the electorate voted. When Morsi gave himself ultimate and supreme power, a rift grew between his Islamist supporters and many Western-educated Egyptians who had hoped for a truly democratic government. As time passed and Morsi continued to try amassing power, those who wanted a more democratic style of government began to protest and sought to overthrow Morsi. The protests began in November 2012 and continued through June 2013. In early July 2013, the Morsi government was overthrown in a coup backed by the Egyptian military. The new government was headed by Minister of Justice Adly Mansur, but he was tainted by having served in the Mubarak government. A new constitution was put to the public for a vote in January 2014 and was approved by only one-third of the electorate. Two-thirds of the registered electorate stayed away from the voting booths. This was slightly more than those who cast ballots in the Morsi elections. 'Abd al-Fatah Sisi resigned as head of the military so he could run for the presidency. In May 2014, with only slightly more than 40 percent of eligible voters casting ballots, he won the vast majority of votes cast. Egypt once again had a military leader. Many Egyptians saw Sisi as a stabilizing factor, and Copts generally liked him. Copts had suffered during the one year of Morsi's rule and wanted someone who would protect them. Western-educated Egyptians

were generally disappointed with the results of the Arab Spring that did not change the status quo of an oppressive military regime—but at least the Islamists had not won either. Egypt could continue to allow the voicing of secular ideas as long as there were no protests and stability returned as well. Some observers argue that Egypt's revolution began in 1952 and had a second round from 2011 to 2013. They expect a third round will happen some 50 years from now once conditions become so bad that the people can no longer endure them. Egypt's tourist industry was profoundly affected, and it has suffered several other blows such as the recent success of Islamic State terrorists in placing a bomb on a jet bound to Russia from Sharm al-Shaykh, an Egyptian resort city. Egypt, however, is as safe and secure as nearly anywhere in the world today. Egypt's people are warm, hospitable to visitors, and generous almost to a fault.



Egyptians protesting against the Supreme military council management of the post-revolution transformation to democracy in Alexandria, Egypt, April 20, 2012. (Mohamed Hanno/[Dreamstime.com](http://Dreamstime.com))

Sudan felt little of the Arab Spring, but it does have its own controversial issues. Northern Sudanese have faced years of conflict with fundamentalist Islamists, and for much of the 1990s Al Qaeda was allowed to operate in full public view. The Ummah Party of Sadiq al-Mahdi, a direct descendant of Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, struggled with the government, with the more radical Hassan al-Turabi, and with the civil war in the south. The Ummah Party was Islamist but not radical because it stemmed from a Sufi tradition. Hassan al-Turabi, on the other hand, although related by marriage to Sadiq al-Mahdi, favored the more radical Ikhwan al-Muslimin (Muslim Brotherhood) of Egypt's

Sayyid al-Qutb.

Al-Qutb had been arrested and executed in 1966 by Jamal al-Nasir for attempting to assassinate him. Al-Qutb had been inspired by Salafi authors of the end of the 19th century such as Muhammad ‘Abdu but took their ideas to an extreme. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1921 in Isma‘iliyah in Egypt by Hassan al-Bana’ as an openly anti-imperialist and anti-British organization whose purpose was to liberate Egypt from the British. Al-Nasir had wanted to include them in the prerevolution planning period, and Anwar al-Sadat was chosen to be the go between with the Muslim Brotherhood. However, al-Nasir was too much of a secularist (one of his role models was Turkey’s Mustafa Kamal Atatürk) to feel comfortable with them, and an attempt on al-Nasir’s life in 1954 was blamed on the brotherhood. Qutb was a prolific writer and had a great deal of credibility because he had spent two years in the United States and returned feeling disgusted with the West. Qutb’s book *Fi Dhilal al-Qur’an (In the Shade of the Koran)* outlined how contemporary Muslims could and should live a religious life. It is the “constitution” for such organizations as Al Qaeda.

When President Bashir opened Sudan to all Arab “brothers,” he essentially invited Arab fighters from Afghanistan to a new home because their home countries denied them any right to return. Many Arab regimes were afraid of the consequences of letting them return, especially when they saw the problems Algeria was having with the growth of its own radical Islamists. Sudan also became a safe haven for radical individuals who had not been to Afghanistan. Because of failed military exploits by Al Qaeda, including a failed attempt to assassinate Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak during a state visit to Ethiopia, Bashir withdrew Sudan’s hospitality and forced Al Qaeda to move to Pakistan. Hasan al-Turabi tried to seize power by backing several coup attempts but was thwarted. Eventually, both Islamist leaders, al-Mahdi and al-Turabi, were arrested, and both have withdrawn from politics.

Sudan had another civil conflict in Darfur in addition to the one with the south. The people of Darfur are Muslims but not Arabs, and when global warming caused pastures in northern Sudan to dry up, Arabic-speaking Bedouin were forced to seek pasture and water to the south in Darfur. They were met by an armed local rebellion against Khartoum’s control of the region and what the indigenous Fur considered to be an apartheid-like attitude toward them. Rather than a simple ethnic war as portrayed in Western news media, the crisis in Darfur was much more complicated. The atrocities committed by a self-styled militia, the *janjaweed* (a local term for ghosts), drove out the local Fur, and their

farms became grazing lands for the Arabs. The extreme measures taken by the *janjaweed* were fully supported by the Sudanese government but condemned by the international community. However, this was not the first time the Sudanese government armed Arab tribesmen and set them the task of subduing local resistance. The *murahilin* or mobile units were used in the south and in the Nuba Mountains against both the Sudan People's Liberation Army and civilians, especially in the Nuba Mountains and Abyei Province. Both the *janjaweed* and the *murahilin* took women and children captive as slaves to be sold in the north. Women were raped, sometimes repeatedly.

Sudan suffered international sanctions, and President Bashir is now wanted by the International Court of Justice in the Hague for war crimes. He has remained outside the reach of the court and has received assistance from other African leaders such as Jacob Zuma of South Africa. The Congressional Black Caucus in Washington, D. C., has condemned the actions of the *janjaweed* because they pit "white" Arabs against "black" Africans. Little was heard about Darfur after 2009, but not all combatants have put down their weapons. The conflict in Darfur brought in troops from African countries as part of a peace force from the African Union, although the Khartoum government refused to call them "peacekeepers."

Sudan was also home to the longest civil war in African history, one that lasted from 1955 to 1972 and again from 1983 to 2005. The southern part of Sudan was not prepared by the British for integration with the north, and British policies of separating the north and south linguistically, religiously, and economically created the northern perception that the south was "primitive" and "backward." When the north took over in 1956, the south was already in rebellion against the Arabization process that had started in 1955. Sudan was controlled by northerners who were Arab speaking and Muslim. Few in the south could speak Arabic, although the local dialect called Juba Arabic began to spread along the Nile. Only the Ngok Dinka are influenced by Arabic culture and Islam because they inhabit the disputed Abyei Province along with the Baggarah Arabs. The civil war was brought to an end in 2011 with a general referendum on total separation. A final decision on Abyei was postponed to a later date, and the United Nations noted that Arabs living in Abyei have been there long enough to be included with the other indigenous inhabitants of the area.

Ethiopia's revolution in 1974 ended the rule of the country's last emperor, Haile Selassie, the last of the Solomonic dynasty. The collapse of the Ethiopian

empire was the result of a lengthy civil war with ethnic groups in what is today Eritrea, mutiny in the army, and protests against rising food costs. In fact, rising food prices were the result of rising fuel costs in the aftermath of the 1973 October War and the fuel embargo led by Arab oil producers. Haile Selassie died while in prison, but it is not entirely clear whether he was killed or died of a respiratory illness. He was survived by Crown Prince Asta Wossen. Wossen condemned the new government's execution of 60 generals and the grandson of the emperor; as a result, the government announced the end of the dynasty. Officially known as the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army, what came to be known as the *Derg* was used by new leader Mengistu Haile Mariam to conduct war against the provinces of Eritrea, resettle millions of people, and ally itself with Cuba and the Soviet Union. Ethiopia suffered one of the worst famines in the mid-1980s caused by inept planning and the government's massive resettlement program, which killed perhaps 100,000 people and was aggravated by drought. Money given as food aid was redirected and spent on weapons. The disastrous policies led to the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1991 after Eritreans defeated Ethiopia's military. In the same year, Ethiopian rebels from the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front seized the ancient capital of Gondar and other cities. The Soviet Union announced it would no longer provide military aid, and soon afterward Mengistu escaped to Kenya, where he was given asylum and continues to live today. The period of the Derg was over, and Ethiopia emerged as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Seventy-three Derg officials were arrested and held for trial on charges of genocide; in 2008, many were executed. Mengistu and 23 others were found guilty in absentia, and 16 were freed after serving long prison sentences.

Uganda also passed through a period of internal unrest starting in 1971 when Milton Obote was overthrown in a military coup by Idi Amin Dada. Obote had fled to Tanzania and was joined by 20,000 Ugandans. Idi Amin was initially popular because Obote was generally hated. Amin's coup was supported by Great Britain, Israel, and the United States, and he was seen as being pro-West. He had served with distinction with British forces during the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya between 1952 and 1960. The British thought that Amin was "their man" and felt confident in him. However, Amin soon proved to be far less than charming and affable than the British hoped, and he soon began singling out ethnicities in Uganda, the Acholi and Lango in the army, and killed some 5,000 of them in their barracks. In 1971, he closed the Israeli embassy and sought aid

from Libya's Mu'ammar Qaddafi. Amin decided the Indians brought to Uganda by the British to build the railway that linked the country to Africa's eastern coast were preventing Ugandans from being successful in business, so in 1972 he gave them 90 days to leave the country. Although Amin expelled thousands of Indians, Indophobia had begun long before and found one of its first expressions in 1969 when Obote passed the first anti-Indian business restrictions. In 1977, the British broke relations with Uganda, and Amin then declared himself to be the conqueror of the British Empire. During Amin's eight-year rule, between 300,000 and 500,000 Ugandans were killed, including one of Amin's three divorced wives, Kay. In 1979, he invaded Tanzania and annexed a Tanzanian province, but the Tanzanian army had no trouble defeating the Ugandan forces and had thousands of Ugandan exiles join them. When the Tanzanian army was only miles from the Ugandan capital of Kampala, Amin fled to Saudi Arabia where he lived openly until his death in 2003. He is survived by 40 officially recognized children by his seven wives.

His bizarre behavior as well as the fear people had for him was well illustrated in the 1974 self-biographical film by Swiss documentary filmmaker Barbet Schroeder called *General Idi Amin Dada*. Schroeder allowed Amin to speak freely and accompanied the dictator around the country as he attended meetings, met with his cabinet, attended war games with his military, and met with crowds of common Ugandans. Amin wrote and performed the film's music on an accordion. The 2006 British film *The Last King of Scotland* alludes to the rumor that Amin ate parts of his victims, and though the charges were never proven the story remains part of his legacy. Amin's erratic behavior has been explained by conjectures that he suffered from syphilis, which causes mental deterioration, or bipolar disorder. To this day, it is not known how a man who could be charming and affable could also be so cruel. In *The Last King of Scotland*, American actor Forest Whitaker does an excellent job portraying Idi Amin down to his accent and quick mood changes.

Controversies along the course of the Nile tend to be political in nature. Water is the one essential thing all nations along the river share, but the attitudes of Egypt and Sudan make it hard to come to any mutual agreement. Other countries have suffered civil war or brutal regimes that also cause continued conflict and controversies. Even though most of the countries have signed the 1999 Nile Basin Agreement, Egypt feels its share of the Nile's water must be increased to provide for its future population growth. It threatens war over the issue, which could bring in other state actors. The Nile remains one of the most

active hot zones in world geopolitics.

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# **Part II**

## **Topical Entries**

### ‘ABD AL-HALIM HAFIZ (1929–1977)

‘Abd al-Halim Hafiz was born ‘Abd al-Halim ‘Ali Shabanah in the Nile delta village of al-Halawat in Sharqiyah Province of Egypt. His parents were poor, and his mother died as a result of his birth and his father when he was still a young boy. ‘Abd al-Halim and his siblings were sent to an orphanage but eventually an aunt and uncle took them in and raised them. As a child, ‘Abd al-Halim contracted bilharzia or schistosomiasis, a disease from parasites that live in stagnant canal water and enter the bloodstream through cuts or skin abrasions. The parasite eventually settles in the liver and can eventually kill its host.

‘Abd al-Halim’s fame began in 1953 when he substituted for a well-known singer who had cancelled a radio performance. His voice was incredible, and to control a possible rival, the great Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab signed him to his company. Although the plan was to stifle him, ‘Abd al-Halim was soon every young woman’s dream and every young man’s role model. He quickly became a singer for the country and represented the new, modern youth of Egypt. He was given the titles *Sawt al-Sha‘ab* (“Voice of the People”) and *Ibn al-Thawrah* (“Son of the Revolution”) for his performance of patriotic songs in support of ‘Abd al-Nasir and the revolution. He was also called *al-‘Andalib al-Asmar* (“The Dark-Skinned Nightingale”) for his romantic songs.

In 1955, al-Halim had his first starring role in a film and began his highly successful film career as a leading man. In 1956, he starred with Shadia in *Dalilah*, the Arab world’s first Technicolor film. In 1969, he starred in his last film, *Abi Fawq al-Shajarah* (*Father Up a Tree*) with Nadia Lutfi and ‘Imad Hamdi. The film caused a major stir with its numbers of kisses, and it is still banned from Egyptian television (Darwish 1998, p. 32). It ran for an unprecedented five months at the box office when first released and contains some of his best songs (Shafik 1998, p. 105). Though his songs were extremely popular, he did not make many studio recordings, preferring instead to sing at

live venues. Despite his illness and how much physical pain he was in, he never disappointed his audiences. He worked with some of the best talent in Egypt and played a number of musical instruments, including the piano, oboe, and oud. ‘Abd al-Halim’s last recording was “Qari’at al-Finjan,” or “Coffee Cup Fortune Teller,” one of his best songs, which he recorded while in great pain due to liver failure. ‘Abd al-Halim died in London in 1977 from complications while undergoing treatment for bilharzia. With his death, Egypt ended an era with Umm Kulthum’s death in 1975 and Farid al-Atrash’s death in 1974. Three of the greatest stars of the Arab music scene all died within a few years of one another.

‘Abd al-Halim was beloved throughout the Arab world; even today his recordings outsell his competitors. His last album was released after his death. His songs, even those from the 1950s, remain popular and inspired people during the 2011 Tahrir uprising against Mubarak. ‘Abd al-Halim was not only a film and singing star but also a businessman. He cofounded the Egyptian recording company Soutelphan (Sawt al-Fann), which exists today as part of EMI Arabia. He has left a legacy of more than 300 songs and 16 films.

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [Umm Kulthum](#).

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## ABU SIMBEL

The great temple of Abu Simbel is located deep in Nubia and beyond the normal borders of ancient Egypt, which end south of Aswan. The temple is 175 miles (281 kilometers) south of Aswan—only 25 miles north of the Sudanese border—and today is approachable by bus from Aswan and by boat on Lake Nasser. Between 1964 and 1968, the world helped save Abu Simbel and other monuments of ancient Egypt in Nubia from becoming inundated by the growing Lake Nasser behind the Aswan High Dam. The ruins were moved stone by stone, and a new hill was built in which Abu Simbel's chambers were placed. The massive rock faces from the temple were then placed on the hill.

The temple of Abu Simbel was one of seven temples built in Nubia by Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE). The site has two temples. The larger temple is dedicated to the gods Amun-Ra, Ra-Horakhty, and Ptah along with the deified Ramesses, and the small temple is dedicated to the goddess Hathor. Because of its remote location, the temples at Abu Simbel were not “discovered” by Europeans until 1813 by Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burchardt and were first excavated in 1817 by Giovanni Belzoni for Henry Salt, the British consul general.

The larger Abu Simbel temple is the best known because of its gigantic statues of a seated Ramesses, each measuring 66 feet (21 meters) in height. Both statues of Ramesses have a queen, princess, and prince in what seem to be miniatures on each side and a smaller one between the legs. Standing in a niche between the two pairs of seated statues is the god Ra-Horakhty. The small temple's façade is decorated with statues of Hathor, Nefertari, and Ramesses that stand nearly 34 feet (10 meters) tall. They are flanked with statues of princes and princesses. The large temple glorifies the Pharaoh Ramesses, while the small temple was built for his wife, Nefertari (1300–1250 BCE). She is shown in the guise of Hathor in statues at the front of the temple as well as on the columns inside. In the large temple, the inside columns are in the form of Osiris. The sanctuary in the large temple is built so that the sun's rays touch the four seated figures at the back: Ptah (the god of Memphis), Amun-Ra (god of Thebes), Ra-

Horakhty (god of Heliopolis), and Ramesses as a god. The main hall is decorated with depictions of the Pharaoh in battle against the Hittites at Qadesh, as well as against the Libyans, Syrians, and Nubians, Egypt's traditional enemies. The interior was decorated with brilliant colors, but decades of flash photography and breathing inside the temple by numerous visitors have caused the colors to fade.

In 1955, when the Aswan High Dam was being proposed, a team from the United Nations visited Egypt to decide what to do with such a valued world heritage site. The rescue operation began in 1960 with the idea of moving both temples stone by stone. Every stone was numbered, and the large statues were cut into smaller pieces. Eventually, 1,036 pieces were moved from the original location to just outside what would become Lake Nasser. The new location was cleverly reconstructed to imitate the original site. An artificial cliff face allowed an orientation that illuminated the figures inside the large temple with the light of the rising sun twice a year.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Aswan](#); [Egyptology](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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## ABYDOS

Abydos (or *Abedju* in ancient Egyptian) was one of the most important religious centers and is perhaps one of the oldest settlements in Egypt, with evidence of human settlement dating back to the Naqada I period (4000–3500 BCE). It holds the tombs of the earliest dynasties dating from 3150–2663 BCE. It became the center for the worship of the god Osiris. It contains the burial place of Osiris, the Osireion, which dates from the 19th dynasty (around 1280 BCE). The false hill of the burial place of the god was built on what was considered to be the first mound of creation, or the first land that emerged from the original waters of chaos. The structure is open to the sky today, but it had been roofed and covered with a mound of earth and planted with shrubs and trees to represent creation. It is located behind the magnificent temple of Seti I (ruled 1296–1279 BCE), which contains some of the best preserved art of ancient Egypt, including their colors. Among the important aspects of the temple is the list of kings from Menes to Seti I. The temple is laid out with seven rooms, each slightly higher than the one before and dedicated to the gods Osiris, Isis, Horus, Amun-Ra, Re-Horakhty, and Ptah, as well as one to Seti as a god. The 36 scenes in the seven rooms show details of temple rituals for morning and evening and constitute the most complete depiction ever made (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 289).

Other temples were also built at and near the site. Ramesses II (ruled 1279–1212 BCE) had several smaller temples built, and a nearby field called *Umm al-Qa'ab* or “Mother of Pots” holds a large number of tombs dating from the early dynastic period to the New Kingdom. The Arabic name comes from the fact the ground is littered with broken pieces of pottery. A ruin that was originally thought to be a fort, *Shunat al-Zabib* or “Storehouse of Raisins,” lies on a hill above the site. Today, however, it is thought to be large tomb structure, perhaps a precursor to the step pyramid at Saqqarah (Wilkinson 2000, p. 170; Baines and Málek 1990, p. 116).

Egyptians considered Abydos to be a holy place into the Roman era (30 BCE–395 CE) as the ruins at *Kum al-Sultan* or “Mound of the Sultan” attest. It is

enclosed by a massive mud brick wall that dates from the 30th dynasty (380–342 BCE). Later, a Coptic monastery, Dayr Sitt Damayna, was built on the site (Wilkinson 2000, p. 170). Coptic monasteries were often located on sites used by ancient Egyptians to help convert locals to Christianity by converting places already seen as holy to Christian use. Some ancient temples were converted to Christian churches with crosses carved into the faces of the ancient gods.

Abydos had been the capital of the eighth nome, one of the provinces of ancient Egypt (Seidel and Schulz, 2005, p. 287). Today the site lies nine miles (15 kilometers) south of the small town of al-Balyana in the province of Sohag.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Egyptian Gods](#); [Egyptology](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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## AHMAD RIFA'AT TAHTAWI (1801–1873)

Ahmad Rifa'at Tahtawi was a major intellectual of the first part of the 19th century and contributed to the development of modern Egypt. From a wealthy family, he was born in Tahta in Upper Egypt, thus his name Tahtawi. His family lost its land in the early years of Egyptian ruler Muhammad 'Ali's reign, but he was able to study at al-Azhar and graduate because of his intellectual brilliance.

Between 1826 and 1831, Muhammad 'Ali sent a mission to France to learn and bring back knowledge to help Egypt become a modern country. Rifa'at was selected to be the students' spiritual guide, but he learned French better than any other and was soon operating as the Egyptian mission's main translator. He read and translated the works of France's most important minds and therefore began the Egyptian enlightenment.

Once back in Egypt, Rifa'at was asked to be the director of the first Western-type medical school and then as the translator for the artillery school. Both schools were founded by Muhammad 'Ali and were the first such institutions in the Arab world. After a falling out with Muhammad 'Ali's successor, 'Abbas I (ruled 1848–1854), Rifa'at was exiled to Sudan. He did not come back until 'Abbas was dead.

After his return, Rifa'at once again served as the director of the military school and introduced reforms to the educational system in Egypt. He wrote several books on topics as varied as educational reform and his experiences in France. He also translated the works of several of France's leading authors into Arabic. He is recognized as the first scholar in the Arab world to advocate an Arab nationalism. He called Egypt *watan* or "nation" in one of his works called *The Honest Guide*.

**See also:** [Muhammad 'Ali](#).

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### AHMAD ‘URABI (1841–1911)

Ahmad ‘Urabi or Arabi was from the Nile delta region and born in the town of Zaqaziq. He rose through the ranks of officers of Egyptian descent rather than “Ottoman” origin—meaning Turkish, Circassian, or Balkan. When the army was forced to cut back on expenses, it threatened native Egyptian officers but did not affect officers from the old Ottoman elite. As a consequence, Egyptian officers coalesced around ‘Urabi. Many Egyptians, even among the elite, did not like the policies of the Khedive Tawfiq (ruled 1879–1892), which seemed to favor Europeans. The resentment among Egyptians toward Europeans was felt across all social classes and among all religions—Muslims, Christians, and Jews. As a result, the subsequent revolt led by ‘Urabi was and continues to be seen as the first major stirring of Egyptian nationalism.

Following the dismissal of 2,500 Egyptian military officers (and no firings of those from the old elite) and the subsequent resignation of Nubar Pasha as prime minister in 1880, ‘Urabi and other Egyptian colonels protested these actions and the appointment of ‘Uthman Rifqi Pasha as minister of war to new Riyadh Pasha, the new prime minister. Tawfiq’s attempt to squash resentment within the army backfired when ‘Urabi’s soldiers stormed the offices in which the arrested ‘Urabi was being held and not only liberated him but also humiliated officers from the old elite. Forced to bow to pressure from the army and the growing popularity of ‘Urabi even among members of Tawfiq’s own family, the *Khedive* appointed ‘Urabi to his cabinet and dismissed the unpopular ‘Uthman Rifqi but appointed Mahmud Sami, also from the Ottoman elite, who was popular with the army rank and file. For the first time the cry “Egypt for the Egyptians” was heard in the streets of Cairo and other major cities.

Tawfiq was alarmed by his loss of power and the strength of the “nationalists.” He felt he had no choice but to seek aid from France and Britain. Many of the old guard also seemed to back the Europeans, and Edward Malet, the British consul general, feared ‘Urabi would threaten control of the Suez Canal and default on Egypt’s huge foreign debt. Growing anti-European feelings among average Egyptians grew and eventually erupted as antifeign riots in Alexandria in June 1882 and resulted in the deaths of 50 Europeans (Barthorp 1984, p. 32). Tawfiq had appealed to the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul, Sultan ‘Abd

al-Hamid II (ruled 1876–1909), but the sultan was busy with events in the Balkans. Although ‘Abd al-Hamid (for a complete name it has to also include the ‘Abd part) sent a commissioner to investigate the problems, he did not come to Tawfiq’s aid. A meeting of the European powers with the Ottoman government was held in Istanbul, and Great Britain decided to invade. France, however, refused to help and French ships sailed away from the Alexandrian harbor.

The Egyptians fortified their harbor defenses but on July 11, 1882, the British fleet began to bombard Alexandria. The city soon fell, but ‘Urabi’s forces were not defeated. At the urging of Tawfiq, the British landed an expeditionary force allegedly to suppress the revolt against the *Khedive*. The Egyptian forces withdrew to Tell al-Kabir in the eastern delta, where they faced the British and were defeated on September 13, 1882. The British quickly occupied Cairo and enforced British control over Egypt’s finances, military, and police. While the ‘Urabi Revolt failed, it did succeed in boosting Egyptian nationalism and a deep resentment of the British.

‘Urabi was caught and tried in December 1882. He was exiled to the British possession of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). While in Ceylon, ‘Urabi was a humanitarian assisting local Muslims and establishing the first school for Muslims in the country. In 1901, the strongly nationalistic *Khedive* ‘Abbas II Hilmi (ruled 1892–1914) brought ‘Urabi back to Egypt, where he lived until his death in 1911.

**See also:** [Alexandria](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Khedive Tawfiq](#).

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## ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria is Egypt's second largest city after Cairo, the national capital. Alexandria served as the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt from the city's founding around 331 BCE on the site of an older Egyptian town named Ra'katit ("Rhakotis" in Greek). Alexandria was the capital of Egypt for 1,000 years; during the Roman period, it was second only to Rome in importance and size with an estimated population of 500,000. Today it is Egypt's second largest city and its main port with more than 80 percent of the country's import and export trade and a population of nearly 5 million.

Built on a spit of land between the Mediterranean and Lake Mareotis, Alexandria stretches some 20 miles (32 kilometers) along the shore. The ancient city, which is still visible in a few scattered ruins, lies underneath the modern town. The shoreline has since retreated, leaving a good part of ancient Alexandria under the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Since the 1990s, teams of Italian and Egyptian archeologists have brought to light much of ancient Alexandria from under the water.

## History

Alexandria was one of many new cities founded by Alexander II of Macedonia, who was known more commonly as Alexander the Great (ruled 336–323 BCE). Alexander ruled for only 13 years, but his conquest of the Persian Empire and his attempts to blend Hellenism with ancient Middle Eastern cultures produced an important period in history. He established several cities named for himself, but the Alexandria of Egypt would be the most important of them.

Following Alexander's death in 323 BCE in Babylon in modern Iraq, his generals divided the empire between themselves. The longest lasting of the new states was the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt (304 to 30 BCE). Ptolemy I Soter (ruled 304–283 BCE) took or stole Alexander's body and placed it in the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis. It was then moved to Thebes before Ptolemy II Philadelphus (ruled 283–245 BCE) finally brought it to Alexandria, where it was open to the public until Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (ruled 193–211) ordered it closed. Its location was lost, although current archeological excavations at the necropolis of Taposiris Magna, located some 30 miles (48 kilometers) outside of Alexandria, may reveal the tombs of not only Alexander but also Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolemaic pharaoh of Egypt (ruled 51–49, 48–30 BCE).

Although the Ptolemies brought Hellenistic culture and encouraged its blending with native Egyptian belief, they also embraced Egyptian culture and religion. They combined the Greek Zeus with the Egyptian Amun to create the god Serapis, who was a combination of the Greek Serapis and the Egyptian god Osiris and the Apis Bull, a manifestation of the power of the pharaoh. Serapis was the official god of the Ptolemaic empire, and Alexandria became the center of worship. The Ptolemies began to wear the crowns of the pharaoh and adopt Egyptian religious holidays. Within a few generations, the Ptolemies had become fully Egyptianized. After an initial period of encouraging Greek colonists to come and settle, they began to rely instead on native Egyptians, even in the army. In 217 BCE, Ptolemy IV (ruled 221–205 BCE) defeated Antiochus III Seleucid (ruled 223–187 BCE) at Raphia using mostly Egyptian soldiers.

The Ptolemies ruled not only Egypt but also what was then called Coele Syria (Palestine), as well as Cyrenaica or eastern Libya. As a more sea-oriented power than previous Egyptian dynasties, the Ptolemies took the island of Cyprus and others in the Aegean as well as seaports along the Anatolian and Syrian coasts. This brought important trade to Alexandria in search of Egyptian grain.

Alexandria's power in the Mediterranean was such that the ancient city had four ports, one for the imperial palace alone, which helped grow subsequent port towns such as Canopus and Heracleion. Heracleion had been an older Egyptian city with a major temple to Amun. The Ptolemies used it to enhance their acceptance by the Egyptian people while visiting the site once a year to ensure the Nile floods and to honor the god Osiris with a procession in boats. Heracleion today lies under the water in Abu Qir Bay. To better guide the ships, the great Lighthouse or Pharos of Alexandria, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was built. Standing 350 feet (110 meters) tall, it was the tallest structure of the ancient world with the exception of the Great Pyramids of Giza.

## Library of Alexandria

Alexandria housed one the most important academies of the ancient world with the largest library—the Museum of Alexandria. Begun by Ptolemy I Soter, at its zenith it allegedly held perhaps a half-million manuscripts, but the figure is more likely 70,000. A second and lesser library was housed in the Serapeum. The library contained not only books from the Hellenistic traditions but also those of non-Greeks such as Egyptians, Hebrews, and Persians, among others.

The library was destroyed by several fires, the first occurring during the dynastic conflict that marked the rise of Ptolemy VIII Physcon Euergetes II (ruled 179–116 BCE). The library was further damaged in what are called the Alexandrine Wars between sisters Cleopatra VII and Arsinoe IV in 48 BCE and then again during the Roman occupation during the conflict between Cleopatra VII and her brother, Ptolemy XIII (ruled 51–47 BCE). The Romans are blamed for this fire. This was dramatized in the 1963 Hollywood feature film *Cleopatra* starring Elizabeth Taylor in the title role.

The library was once again burned by the Emperor Aurelian (ruled 270–275), when the Romans retook Alexandria from the Syrian queen Zenobia (ruled 267–273). In the siege of the city, fires may have destroyed the remaining volumes in the main library.

The Serapeum took the leading role as the major center of study in late antiquity. Christianity began to grow in Alexandria with the arrival of the Apostle Mark. The Serapeum was taken over by the Christians following pagan and Christian riots in 391 when Emperor Theodosius I allowed them to take over pagan places of worship and banned pagan rites in the empire.

Alexandria remained the capital of Egypt through the Roman and Byzantine periods and was finally replaced with al-Fustat with the Arab and Muslim conquest in 641. Although no longer the political center of Egypt, Alexandria remained important into modern times as both the center of the Coptic faith at the Church of St. Mark and as the major port for trade. Connected by water to Cairo, Alexandria remained Egypt's face on the Mediterranean, and its community was a mix of Greeks, Maltese, Italians, Jews, native Egyptians, and Turks into the mid-20th century. Among its Greek inhabitants, one of the most famous was Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933), an important poet of modern Greek.

Alexandria's foreign population grew after the British invasion of 1881 because the Egyptian stock market was located there, particularly that trading in cotton. This included a large European (mainly Italian) Jewish community. Following the collapse of the monarchy, nearly all non-Egyptians left. Today Alexandria remains an important city and Egypt's main Mediterranean.

**See also:** [Ahmad 'Urabi](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [History of Egypt: Ptolemaic and Roman Periods](#).

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## AL-SADIQ AL-MAHDI (1935–PRESENT)

Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi is an important political figure in modern Sudan. He is the great grandson of Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi (the Mahdi). The Mahdi’s family took the title as its last name even during Muhammad Ahmad’s lifetime. They became the *ashraf* (nobles) as opposed to the *ansar* (followers) of the Mahdi. When the Mahdiyyah—the state set up by the Mahdi and governed after his death by his successor, Khalifah ‘Abdullahi—was destroyed by the British expeditionary force in 1898, the *ashraf* under the leadership of the Mahdi’s son, ‘Abd al-Rahman, became leader of the family and a founder of the Ummah or National Party. His father, Siddiq, was a son of ‘Abd al-Rahman, and his family connection to the Mahdi has been one of his main sources of power and popularity among the Sudanese (Kramer *et al.* 2013).

Al-Sadiq was educated in Sudan, graduating from Khartoum University as well as from England, where he received a master’s degree from Oxford University (“Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi” 2014). He was seen to combine Sudanese and Islamic sensitivity with contemporary Western ideas of democracy and for that reason became a “darling” of the West. He grew in political importance when his father died in 1961, becoming head of the Ummah Party and elected prime minister in 1966. He was overthrown in a military coup in 1967 that brought Ja‘afar al-Numayri to power. In 1970, al-Sadiq’s power base expanded when in his uncle, al-Hadi, was killed by Numayri and al-Sadiq took over his uncle’s position as Imam of the *Ansar*. Al-Sadiq sought political asylum in Libya, where he and Mu‘ammar Qaddafi became allies.

In 1977, Numayri allowed al-Sadiq to return to Sudan but without a government post. In 1985, Numayri was overthrown. In the elections that



followed, al-Sadiq al-Mahdi was elected prime minister for his second time. He was unable to end the long civil war in the south against the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement, and his Islamic reforms fell short of what the Islamist parties wanted. He armed the Baggarah Bedouin in South Kordofan Province and Darfur, and they committed crimes against unarmed civilians. His international image was badly damaged, especially because the government tried to cover up the incidents.

In 1989, his government was overthrown in an Islamist coup by the National Islamic Front, whose main ideologue is Hasan al-Turabi, al-Sadiq's brother-in-law. Al-Sadiq was jailed or under house arrest until he was able to escape in 1996. He eventually joined the National Democratic Alliance in Cairo in 2000 but was successfully sidelined by 'Umar al-Bashir when he returned to Sudan. He now lives in Omdurman. Although he is not officially under house arrest, the government's refusal to deal with the old political parties has effectively ended his political career.

**See also:** [Hasan al-Turabi](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#).

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## ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION

The ancient Egyptian religion was as complex and incomprehensible to the Greeks and Romans as it seems to us today. The focus of Egyptians' religion was on the cycle of life—birth, death, and rebirth—as seen every day with the course of sun from its birth in the eastern sky to its path across the sky to its setting (and symbolic death) in the west and its rebirth the next day. The moon had a similar rise and setting as well as a monthly cycle of being full to being invisible. The Nile River also had periods of flooding and low water. All of this supported the concept of life, death, and rebirth. Today's Western population carries on aspects of ancient religion in some of the popular expressions at Easter time; the Easter bunny and Easter eggs descend from ancient Egyptian symbols of New Year's celebrations, which remains a holiday in modern Egypt called *Sham al-Nassim* or “Sniffing the Breeze,” which occurs close to the Eastern Christian date of Easter.

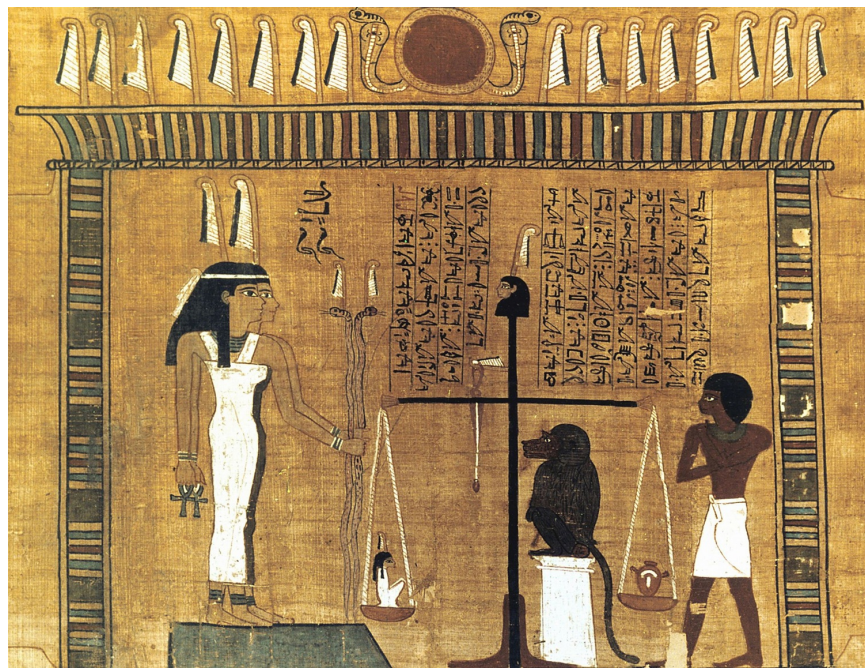
Ancient Egyptian religion had numerous local gods and cult centers. Each nome had its own gods and often even its own creation myth. Temples were of two types: one for the local god and the other the mortuary temple for the ruler. Temples were not used as places of worship but as places to maintain the order of the universe. They served as centers of the economy, places of learning, and major land-owning institutions. Common people were not allowed beyond the temple's outer door but could offer prayers and ask for the god's help in the temple's outer courtyard, but only priests and their acolytes were allowed into the temple. Not until the New Kingdom were the statues of the gods viewed by the public, but during the New Kingdom, some of the celebrations at Thebes (modern Luxor) allowed for the god Amun's statue to be carried around his temple in a boat to represent his solar journey across the sky to music and dancing by the crowd. This ancient custom has been Islamicized and today the solar boat (with no statue) is carried around the temple to honor the Sufi *shaykh* buried inside the ancient temple, Abu Hajjaj.

Only a small number of men were Egyptian priests, and they were frequently close relatives of the ruling pharaoh. The pharaoh was the official high priest for all of the cults in the country, but given his inability to perform all of the required sacred duties, he appointed high priests (also called chief priests or first prophets) to all of the cult centers in the kingdom. While the majority of the priests were men, women also had a place in the temples as wives of the god. Goddesses such as Hathor and Isis had priestesses who usually dealt with fertility.

Much of Egyptian religion was funerary, dealing with the issues of death and rebirth in the afterlife. The body was prepared with 40 days of mummification that was watched over by the god Anubis. *The Book of the Dead* described in detail the journey of the soul to the afterlife and gave charms and chants for the soul to say at various stages in the journey. Three elements were key in the rebirth of the soul in the afterlife: the *Ka* or the spirit or life force that joined the body at birth, the *Ba* or the unique attributes of the individual, and the *Ankh*, which means the transfigured spirit or the unification of the *Ka* and *Ba* and often represented as the *shabti* figure. The *shabti* figure was a representation of the mummified person and was buried with body in the coffin along with other charms. Even the linen bindings of the mummy included written charms or even lines from *The Book of the Dead* to help protect the soul. The soul went through the harrowing “weighing of the heart” in which Anubis placed the dead person’s heart on a scale to weigh it against a feather. Thoth recorded the event, and Osiris sat in judgment along with a tribunal of 42 gods. A good heart would balance the feather. If the heart was bad, however, the weight of its evil would be heavy, and the monster Ammit—composed of a crocodile, a lion, and a hippopotamus—would eat the heart and the soul would be condemned. To help the heart, charms in the form of heart scarabs were placed with the mummy that would prevent the soul from testifying against itself.

Ancient Egyptians followed three major funerary texts: *The Pyramid Texts*, *The Coffin Texts*, and *The Book of the Dead*. *The Pyramid Texts* refer to some 800 spells that were carved into the walls of pyramids starting with the Fifth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom. No one pyramid contains all 800 spells, but the tomb of Pepy II (2278–2184 BCE) contains more than 600 (Oakes and Gahlin 2003, p. 400). These texts were originally for the Pharaoh, but his wives, priests, and nobles also used them. *The Coffin Texts* were painted or carved into the wooden sarcophagi, thus the name, as well as on tomb walls, statues, and offering tables. These included a map of the afterlife that mirrored the daily

journey of the sun. It warned of traps and monsters that would be encountered along the way and how the soul was to be prepared to safely pass them all. If not, the soul would be destroyed before it even reached the place where the heart was judged. *The Book of the Dead* appears to be a later text than the other two and is far more focused on the cult of Osiris. The 200 spells were written on papyrus or on the mummification bandages and were frequently illustrated with colored drawings, making their reproduction in contemporary Egypt popular as tourist souvenirs. The texts were placed in the coffin along with the body or in the statue of Ptah–Sokar–Osiris placed in the tomb near the body. Most of the spells asked Osiris to help the spirit, unlike the older two, who addressed the sun god Ra.



*The Book of the Dead* gave 200 sets of spells that helped the soul, especially when its heart was weighed against a feather. If the heart proved to be too heavy, the soul would be eaten by Ammit, a monster with the head of a crocodile and body of a lion. (Jupiterimages)

Mummification required that most of the moist vital organs be removed; the most important were preserved in canopic jars. There were four jars per person, each surmounted by a representation of the four sons of Horus: baboon-headed Hapy, who kept the lungs; human-headed Imsety, who kept the liver; jackal-headed Duamutef, who guarded the stomach and upper intestines; and falcon-headed Qebehsenuef, who guarded the lower intestines. Each item was removed and embalmed before mummification began, and each son of Horus was further

protected by the gods Nephthys, Isis, Neith, and Selket. The prevailing belief was that the soul could not be reborn in the afterlife without the vital organs.

## Mummies

In the early dynastic period (before 3500 BCE), the Egyptians buried their dead in the desert sands, a practice that naturally leached all moisture from the body and left only dried skin and bones. When Egyptians began burying their dead in tombs (3400 BCE), they wrapped the bodies in pitch and natron-saturated cloth, but the body still decayed. The Egyptians realized they would have to remove the moisture from the body, which meant removing the internal organs. During the Fourth Dynasty (2613–2498 BCE), specialized priests began embalming the dead and developed a process that took up to 70 days to complete and led to the four canopic jars to hold various organs. Each canopic jar was in the shape of one of the four sons of Horus. Initially, mummification was only for the Pharaoh and his kin, but as the art of embalming developed along with the religion, it was opened to those who could afford it. The best mummifications took place from the 18th to 20th Dynasties (1550–1069 BCE), but the process continued until forbidden by Christianity (third century CE).

The word “mummy” comes into English via Latin from the Arabic word *mumiya*, meaning bitumen; the Arabic itself is derived from the Persian word *mum* or “wax” as well as to embalm a corpse. Classic works on medicine such as Galen (129–216) and ibn Sina (980–1037) wrote of the usefulness of using mummies in medicine. During the medieval period in Europe, ground mummies were used as medicine to treat concussions, epilepsy, paralysis, and ulcers, as well as prevent infection and stop bleeding. In medieval Europe, mummies were seen as a cheap alternative to bitumen from Iran, so hundreds, if not thousands, of mummies were bought and exported from Alexandria. Mummies were also known to burn easily and produce an intense fire.

In addition, ancient Egyptians also had forms of popular religion. Popular religion was more accessible than the official religion, which asked little from the average person. For everyday concerns, people turned to the use of amulets and magic. The god of magic, Heka, had no major temples but was worshipped in the house. He protected through magic wands and spells. It remains unclear who provided the services for popular religion, but it may have been a lesser priest, a lector priest, who served the community outside of the temple. Ancient Egyptians not only blended official and popular religions but also blended popular religion and medicine. Although some illnesses were treated with charms and spells, others were treated with natural products after people were examined and diagnosed in ways that fit with modern clinical treatments.

Demons, evil spirits, and ghosts were constant threats for ancient Egyptians. Many of them were associated with the goddess Sekhmet and her destructive powers. Seth was another source of evil in the world. Demons lived in the desolate and infertile desert and backward from humans—that is, what is bitter in this world is sweet to them, and what is sweet for humans is not only bitter but

also repulsive to them. It is for this reason honey was often used to ward off demons and protect children.

The Egyptians had several other household gods in addition to Heka. These included Taweret, protector of childbirth, and Bes, a comical demonlike spirit who was represented as a dwarf. Taweret was a female hippopotamus with a large stomach and pendulous breasts—clearly, a pregnant woman. Nonetheless, she was a terrible and feared object with a lion head and forearms and a crocodile tail. She protected a woman in childbirth and held in her hands the *Ankh* symbol of life. Bes was a composite of several lesser spirits who protected people. He was a dwarf with lion's ears and mane and was seen as either smiling benevolently or with a fierce gaze and bared teeth. He played musical instruments and danced. He was seen to protect children and was favored as a tattoo on female dancers' legs.

## Wdjat Eye

The *wdjat* or *udjat* was the eye of the god Horus and symbolized healing, wholeness, strength, and perfection. The eye was a frequent amulet worn by ancient Egyptians and was associated with the power of the new young pharaoh. According to ancient Egyptian mythology, Horus and his uncle Seth fought a long battle after Seth killed Osiris, Horus's father. To defeat Seth and gain his father's usurped throne, Horus had to endure a number of combat trials. In one of these, Seth pulled out one or both of Horus's eyes, depending on the version. Horus was able to reset his eye or eyes; according to some stories, the reset eye was weaker and therefore became the moon while the other eye became the sun. Horus was able to reset his eye and restore its health by using gazelle milk. The conflict between Seth and Horus was to be judged by the other gods, but they were not able to make the judgment. Eventually, Horus won the fight.

The entire cycle of the fight between Horus and Seth is depicted on the walls of several temples, especially at Edfu, a temple dedicated to Horus. The two are seen in different locales as they battle, and Seth turned himself into both crocodiles and hippopotami, which were both seen as forces of uncontrolled violence.

The *wdjat* was a powerful symbol in ancient Egypt and was part of jewelry for the living and charms for the dead. They were painted on tomb walls and carved into temples. Mummies had one or more *wdjat* charms placed on them during the wrapping stage.

**See also:** [Egyptian Gods](#); [Egyptology](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#); [Religious Holidays and Celebrations](#).

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## ASWAN

Aswan derives its name from the ancient Egyptian word *swnet*, which means “trade.” Aswan was called Syene by the Greeks. The original pharaonic settlement was on the island of Elephantine, called *abu* or “elephant” by ancient Egyptians because of the large amount of ivory traded there. The city was the capital of the First Nome, nomes or provinces being counted from south to north, and was on the border with Nubia at the First Cataract (counting the cataracts north to south). The nearby islands of Biga and Philae contain several important ruins. The last hieroglyphic inscription was made on Philae in 394 CE, and the last demotic graffiti was in 452 CE. It is also the last place to worship the old gods of Egypt following the decrees by Emperor Theodosius I (379–395) between 389 and 392 that proscribed the old religions and required conversion to Christianity. The sites around the First Cataract reminded the Egyptian people of the primeval world of creation, including a mound of creation on the island of Biga.

Aswan was a provincial capital and had several monuments such as the nilometer, which was the first structure along the course of the Nile to measure its yearly rise and fall. Aswan was the source for the pink granite used in pharaonic buildings, and the quarries where stones were cut still has an unfinished obelisk that was abandoned after it cracked when being chiseled out of the granite. Also unfinished are a colossus of a pharaoh and several Greco-Roman sarcophagi. Some say the name “Aswan” derives from the term “syenite,” which was once used to designate granite but is today applied to a different type of stone.

Today, Aswan is a major city of some 293,000. A short distance to the south lies the Aswan dam built by the British between 1898 and 1902. Called the

“Low Dam,” it was raised between 1907 and 1912 to produce electricity. Nonetheless, annual Nile flooding continued. In 1955, al-Nasir planned to modernize Egypt and needed to have more electricity than the Low Dam could provide and sought assistance from Britain and the United States. In 1956, he nationalized the Suez Canal, and in response the British, French, and Israelis attacked Egypt. Al-Nasir then turned to the Soviet Union for assistance and work on the new High Dam began in 1960. The rise of the subsequent lake led to an international effort to save the monuments from total flooding, and many of the ancient ruins were taken to safety through a massive effort. The High Dam was completed in 1970 and inaugurated by President Anwar al-Sadat.



**Fresco of the 24 Church Fathers from the monastery of St. Hatre, or St. Simeon, located on the west bank of the Nile at Aswan. Many of the frescos were deliberately defaced by Muslim invaders. (John A. Shoup)**

Aswan is still a lively market town with many shops specializing in tourist items. The main market is called the Nubian Market, and several villages around the area are inhabited by ethnic Nubians, who not only are their own ethnicity in Egypt and Sudan but also have their own unique architecture. Although Muslims today, they were Coptic Christians in the past, which accounts for the ruins of the great monastery of St. Simeon on the west bank of the Nile. Another attraction is Kitchener’s Island after Horatio Kitchener, who stopped for some time in Aswan while on his way back from the conquest of Sudan. He planted many exotic plants in a garden that have continued to flourish. It is now a botanical garden maintained by the municipality.

Tourism is an important part of the local economy, and Aswan is home to the famous Cataract Hotel built in 1899 by the Thomas Cook travel agency. The hotel was used for several scenes in the 1978 film adaptation of Agatha Christie’s novel *Death on the Nile*. Although the original novel was set in Luxor

and used the equally famous Winter Palace Hotel, another colonial era hotel built in 1907, the Cataract Hotel was well situated on the Nile with little to no interference with camera shots. The Winter Palace Hotel has a cornice that runs along its front, making it hard to portray the proper era for the film. Nile cruises are still possible, running from Aswan to Luxor and vice versa, and it is possible to take an old paddle wheeler on Lake Nasser. More adventuresome travelers can take a *fallukah* (traditional sailboat) from either Aswan or Luxor and end up at the other port. Many of the ship captains in Aswan are Nubians. Aswan is also the place where the nomadic *'Ababdah* and *Bishirin* market their goods. They belong to the *Beja* peoples, another African people mainly in Sudan and Eritrea but also found in Egypt as far north as Luxor.

**See also:** [Aswan Dam, Low and High](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#); [Felucca \(Falukkah\)](#); [Nubians](#).

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### **ASWAN DAM, LOW AND HIGH**

Damming the Nile River is an ancient idea, and the first human-created dam on the river was built by the Egyptian pharaoh Namer, or Menes, when he built his capital city of Memphis around 2920 BCE. The dam did not block the flow of the river but did help prevent flooding of the city. During the rule of the Fatimid al-Hakim (996–1021), the scientist ibn al-Haytham al-Basri was asked to build a dam, but the project was never begun. Returning to Cairo, the engineering team told the *Khalifah* that it was not possible to dam the Nile. In his anger, the *Khalifah* seemed to place ibn al-Haytham under house arrest, which lasted until the *Khalifah's* death in 1021. The scientist was then able to emerge once again

and wrote his most influential work on optics.

Until Napoleon's invasion of Egypt at the end of the 18th century, the idea of damming the Nile was apparently never considered again. However, Napoleon revived the idea, and in the 1820s Muhammad 'Ali again revived the idea. The result is the barrage dam built down river from Cairo was started in 1833 and completed in 1862. However, the pressure of the water required that the barrage gates be left open, and the dam served as a useful bridge across the river. When the British occupied Egypt, the barrage was improved and strengthened. However, the older one continued to leak, and eventually the British built a new barrage dam called the "Muhammad 'Ali Barrage" a bit further south toward Cairo between 1936 and 1939.

In 1899, the British began construction on what is now the Low Dam at Aswan. They chose a site where the Nile emerges from the First Cataract and where the valley was narrow, 1,950 meters (6,400 feet). The first dam was constructed not to hold back floodwaters but to allow its gates to be opened during flooding without creating a lake behind it. The dam was raised between 1907 and 1912 and again between 1929 and 1933. During the second dam heightening, electricity production was added with two turbine engines that can produce 592 megawatts.

In the 1950s, Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir wanted to modernize Egypt to become an industrial country. He saw Egypt's potential in harnessing the power of the Nile River and began considering a second dam at Aswan. This one was to be much bigger and produce far more electrical power and end yearly flooding. The planning stage between 1954 and 1959 saw Egypt's attempts to secure international funding to finance the project as al-Nasir first went to the United Kingdom and then the United States. However, al-Nasir's relations with British Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden began to turn sour over an arms deal made between Egypt and Czechoslovakia. Because Czechoslovakia was an Eastern-bloc nation, suspicions of deals with the Soviet Union caused concern in both London and Washington. Egypt also joined the nonaligned movement, which further angered both London and Washington. Eventually, both the United Kingdom and the United States decided not to finance the dam, which al-Nasir saw as a means to keep Egypt weak. In 1956, al-Nasir nationalized the Suez Canal, and Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt, which led the United States and the Soviet Union to threaten military action against them if they did not withdraw.

Although Egypt saw itself as alone in its desire to build the dam, the Soviet

Union provided the financing so the project could move forward. In 1960, work began and the dam was finished in 1970. The finished dam is 364 feet (111 meters) high and 12,570 feet (3,830 meters) long and has a base width of 3,220 feet (980 meters) wide. Criticisms of the dam began early over the issue of so much water being exposed to sunlight; the amount of water lost per year to evaporation alone is staggering. Dams built in Ethiopia or southern Sudan have potential for considerably less water loss. In addition, with the Nile in Egypt being constant year round, damage to pharaonic ruins has increased. Before the dam, when floods receded so did the water table, but now with the level of the Nile constant year round, the water table has increased, which has led to flooding of ancient tomb chambers in the Valley of the Kings above the level of the usual floodwaters. Even more recent Islamic buildings in places such as Cairo are beginning to show the problem. Built mostly in limestone, which is susceptible to water, they now exhibit the effects of crumbling from groundwater penetration. The other issue is the prevalence of the parasite bilharzia, a water-borne liver fluke, which has increased because there no longer are completely dry periods of the year.

The new dam not only supplied electricity but also for the first time controlled the river itself and created a massive lake 350 miles (563 kilometers) long. The lake would drown most of Nubia between Aswan and Wadi Halfa in Sudan, threatening historic monuments and people around the growing lake. Both monuments and the people were moved to new locations, bringing an end to traditional Nubian ways of life. The cost was tremendous in terms of building new settlements and moving major ruins above Lake Nasser's rising waters. The international community came to the aid of the monuments, but little was done for the people who found their new homes located miles from the Nile, which had always been central to their lives. Today, through the efforts of individual Nubians who want to preserve their cultural heritage, aspects of their culture are being revived.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Nubians](#).

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## **ATBARA RIVER**

The Atbara River in eastern Sudan is the last tributary the Nile receives on its way to the Mediterranean Sea. From its source in the northwestern highlands of Ethiopia, the river flows 500 miles (804 kilometers) to join the Nile at the city of Atbara between the Fifth and Sixth Cataracts, 200 miles north of Khartoum. The Atbara contributes significantly to the volume of water carried by the Nile into Egypt and is also an important resource for Sudan and Ethiopia.

### **Khashm al-Girbah Dam**

The Khashm al-Girbah Dam on the Atbara River was built in 1964 to provide irrigation for agricultural schemes developed for the proposed relocation of Nubians from Wadi Halfa in northern Sudan because their territory was to be inundated by the rising waters of Lake Nasser. The Nubians were strongly opposed to the resettlement, which fueled antigovernment demonstrations. The move to an alien, sparsely populated desert meant the loss of their ancestral homelands and way of life based on the cultivation of palm trees. The new schemes included cash crops, especially cotton, as well as wheat and sugar. Local nomadic tribesmen also saw a shift in their traditional lifestyle. With the loss of important grazing land, many had to resort to being settled tenant farmers. The schemes were not as successful as planned. With the high volume of silt washed out of the highlands, the dam soon began to fill with sediment, diminishing the available water for agriculture. New dams upstream are scheduled to open in 2016 that may capture some of the silt and enable the Khashm al-Girbah Dam to become more productive.

The Atbara rises north of Lake Tana and west of the city of Gonder. The river drops quickly out of the highlands and crosses into Sudan near the town of Metemma (Qallabat). Heading northwest, the Atbara receives its main tributaries, the Angareb and Tekeze Rivers, which also originate in Ethiopia. The Tekeze, known as the Setit in Sudan, is a large river and sometimes considered the true headwaters of the Atbara. The Tekeze travels approximately 400 miles (643 kilometers) from the central Ethiopian highlands, passing through one of Africa's deepest gorges, before meeting the Atbara upstream of the Khashm al-Girbah Dam. Beyond the dam, the Atbara flows through a desert landscape, losing much of its water to evaporation. The Atbara is the most seasonal of the Nile's tributaries, with most of the flow coming from June to October when the river is swollen by torrential rainfall in the Ethiopian highlands. During the

flood, the Atbara provides 20 percent of the water reaching Egypt and contains a huge amount of sediment washed down from the highlands. During the dry season, the river shrinks to a trickle between pools of water in the nearly dry riverbed, with little or no flow reaching the Nile.

In the early centuries CE, the area along the Atbara was dominated by the Kingdom of Kush until invading armies from Aksum in Ethiopia travelled down the Atbara to conquer Kush in the fourth century CE. During the Mamluk dynasty in Egypt in the Middle Ages, Arab raiders reached the region; by the 15th century Islam was widely adopted by the nomadic tribes in the area. Early in the 19th century, the conquering armies of Muhammad 'Ali, the Ottoman ruler of Egypt, brought the region under Egyptian control. Samuel Baker, an early explorer of the Atbara and its little-known tributaries, traveled the region in 1861–1862 to observe the land, people, and abundant wildlife. Many of the tribes around the Atbara joined the Mahdist Revolution against Egypt in the early 1880s. During the Anglo–Egyptian reconquest of Sudan, an important battle was fought on the Atbara in 1898 that led to the defeat of the Mahdist state. The 20th century brought changes to the traditional life of the region's nomadic people. Railways, cash crops, and mechanized farming brought an influx of immigrants from other regions, and the government encouraged tribe members to settle on agricultural schemes and in towns. Agreements between Sudan and Egypt have maintained Egypt's right to the vast majority of the Nile's water, but those rights are being challenged by Ethiopia, which opened a dam on the Tekeze River in 2009. As all nations face growing needs for water, sharing the Nile and its tributaries will present future challenges.

**See also:** [Baker, Samuel \(1821–1893\)](#), and [Baker, Florence \(1841–1916\)](#); [Churchill, Winston](#); [Wadi Halfa](#).

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**BAHR AL-GHAZAL RIVER**

The Bahr al-Ghazal River or the River of the Ghazal is the main tributary of the White Nile River and drains much of the region to the west in South Sudan. It is 445 miles (716 kilometers) long. Its basin is the largest of any tributary of the White Nile, with an area of some 328,750 square miles (851,459 square kilometers). The Bahr al-Ghazal rises near the Congo–South Sudanese border town of Yambio and flows north and then west.

The river has several smaller tributaries, including the Bahr al-Arab (the Arab name) or Kiir River (the Dinka name) that flows from Kordofan and Darfur joining with the Jur River to form the Bahr al-Ghazal, though some sources disagree and state that the Bahr al-Arab River joins the Bahr al-Ghazal before the Jur River does. Despite the size of its drainage area, it does not supply that much water to the White Nile, mostly because much of the water is lost in swamps before it flows into Lake No. It joins with the Bahr al-Jabal or the Albert Nile to form the White Nile.

The Bahr al-Ghazal River was mapped as early as 1772 by French geographer Jean-Baptist Bourguignon d'Anville. D'Anville did not visit the region but used historical texts and descriptions to map such places as China. D'Anville used the same historical technique for mapping China to produce maps of Africa, and his map is the first to show the Bahr al-Ghazal more or less where it is. He used classical Greek texts that mentioned the river, which indicated the ancient Greeks were familiar with the river because it was not blocked by the Sudd swamp. It reaches the White Nile after the White Nile passes through the Sudd. Greek knowledge of the river also depended on the works of the ancient Egyptians, who are believed to have sent a slaving expedition up the Nile that may have turned toward the west and followed the Bahr al-Ghazal into what is today the Central African Republic during the reign of Pharaoh Pepi II (2278–2247 BCE). The term in ancient Egyptian for a pygmy is *aka* (Baka is the name

of one of the groups of pygmies who still live in the Central African Republic), and the Egyptian account of the trip includes descriptions of gorillas near where they encountered pygmies.

Today in South Sudan, the name *Baka* is used both for the river and for a province. The province of Bahr al-Ghazal is broken into four subunits: North Bahr al-Ghazal, West Bahr al-Ghazal, Lakes, and Warab. Its tributary, the Bahr al-Arab, forms part of the border between Sudan and South Sudan and is an important grazing area for both Dinka and Arab Baggarah Bedouin.

**See also:** [Dinka](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Nuer](#).

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### **BAKER, SAMUEL (1821–1893), AND BAKER, FLORENCE (1841–1916)**

Samuel and Florence Baker were an incredible husband and wife team of Victorian explorers who were the first to follow the flow of the Nile from its mouth to its source and to prove once and for all the sources of the Nile in central Africa. Samuel Baker was from an aristocratic British family and was well known in elite European circles. In 1858–1859, he was on a hunting trip in the Balkans with a friend, the Maharaja Duleep Singh, when he met his wife, Florence. She was a teenager subject to sale in the slave market of Widden (Vidin) in what is now Bulgaria (Twigger 2013, p. 305). At the time, her name was Florenz Barbara Marie Szász, a young girl from the German-speaking area of Hungary and apparently of noble descent. She spoke German, Hungarian, and Turkish, and it was reported her father and brothers had been killed during the Hungarian revolution of 1848. Baker paid between five and 10 pounds for her and was said to have outbid the Turkish governor of the town and took her on his travels. Another story was that Baker had not been able to outbid the Turk but spirited the girl away down the Danube; this is unlikely given he was on a hunting expedition with a prominent figure (Twigger 2013, p. 306).

Baker was a widower and left his children from his first wife with his sister in Britain; his children were nearly as old as his new “wife.” Although they did not marry until their return to Europe, Baker treated Florence as if she was his wife,

and she exerted a good deal of control over him. She was called Lady Baker by all who met them.

In 1861, Baker and Florence went up the Nile. Florence was having a difficult time with the heat, so to acclimatize themselves to the region they explored the Blue Nile to the borders of Ethiopia. They then proceeded up the Nile to the town of Gondokoro (today's Juba) where an argument between Baker and his men erupted. Florence was able to work out a compromise that allowed them to continue. In 1863, while in Gondokoro, they were visited by John Hanning Speke and his colleague, James Augustus Grant, on their way back from Lake Victoria (Moorehead 2000, p. 59). Speke and Grant had not been able to continue by boat and had taken a land route to avoid the Kingdom of Bunyoro and the demands of King Kamrasi. In doing so, they were unable to map a large section of the Nile as it exits from Victoria, a goal that Baker was determined to accomplish.

Natives had told Speke that the Nile enters another large lake called Nzigé Luta. Baker felt his physical strength was enough to impress any native chief or king, and he and his wife set out up the river. In 1864, they reached Lake Albert and proved that more than one lake feeds the Nile. This was only after King Kamrasi had demanded and been given numerous gifts and had suggested to Baker that he should also give him Florence. When he had suggested this, Baker in a rage drew his pistol and threatened to kill Kamrasi. Surprised by Baker's reaction, Kamrasi withdrew the demand and let the party depart his court and proceed with its expedition. Subsequently, the explorers discovered the great falls on the Nile, which Baker named Murchison Falls after Sir Roderick Murchison, the head of the Royal Geographic Society.

When the two were on their way back to Europe, Baker decided that he could not live without Florence, and the two were married in a private party in 1865. Because of how he had acquired his wife and other "scandals" surrounding around the couple, Samuel Baker never received the same sort of public acclaim as other explorers of the time.

In 1869, Baker was asked by the khedive of Egypt to lead an expedition back to the equatorial regions of the Nile to end slavery there once and for all. Both Samuel and Florence went back; from 1869 until 1873, when relieved by Charles George Gordon, he served as the governor. He was given the title of pasha while in Cairo, and with a command of 1,700 men he traveled up the river to Gondokoro. He expanded the borders of the province to the town of Fatiko in modern Uganda (Collins 2008, p. 19). After four years, the couple moved back

to London. When Gordon was made governor-general of Sudan in 1882, he asked Baker to come with him. It was Florence who said no, and the couple never again went south of Egypt.

**See Also:** [Gordon, Charles George](#); [Grant, James Augustus](#); [Lake Albert](#); [Murchison Falls](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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## **BARRING, SIR EVELYN (LORD CROMER) (1841–1917)**

Evelyn Barring served as the British controller general in Egypt starting in 1877 to deal with paying off Egypt's international creditors. Egypt's Khedive Isma'il (ruled 1863–1879) had borrowed heavily to help finance the Suez Canal and the Egyptian economy, which was based mainly on cotton. That economy suffered after the American Civil War ended and the international value of cotton fell. Egypt had been forced to sell shares in the Suez Canal to foreign investors and therefore lost much of the income from the canal. Egypt had embarked on an ambitious set of projects to improve transportation, roads, railroads, and harbor facilities to better move its products to the world market. The fall in the price of cotton left Isma'il little choice but to seek aid from foreign banks. With Egypt's finances in ruins, the Egyptian parliament refused to raise taxes and Isma'il appealed to European powers for help.

In 1877, dual control was imposed on Egypt under the supervision of British Major Evelyn Barring and French Monsieur de Belgenière. Members of the dual control authority were appointed and fired by the khedive, but in reality it was the European powers who were in control. Upon the recommendation of the dual control authorities, Isma'il was removed from power in favor of his son, Tawfiq (ruled 1879–1892). Popular Egyptian feelings became more and more antforeign with what were seen as the khedive's inaction against the dual control authorities and the continued prejudice against native-born Egyptians in the army. These factors sparked the first major nationalist uprising, the 'Urabi Revolt (1881–1882).

With British assistance, the revolt was crushed and Tawfiq had to suffer the humiliation of turning over the administration of the country to the British. After buying Isma'il's shares of the Suez Canal, Britain wanted to shorten the distance between London and India. The canal became a vital part of the British Empire

until Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir finally expelled Britain from Egypt in 1956.

In 1882, Barring returned to Egypt from India to become the British consul general. He was faced with revolt by Muhammad Ahamd al-Mahdi in Sudan. British Colonel William Hicks took command of an Egyptian expedition meant to end the rebellion, but Hicks and his whole command were defeated and killed. Barring managed to ride out the British public storm over the death of Hicks in 1883 and then of General Charles Gordon in 1885. Barring chose a young officer named Herbert Kitchener, who defeated the Mahdi’s forces in 1899, as the commander of the Anglo–Egyptian forces to reconquer Sudan.

Following the general plan named for British Foreign Secretary Lord Granville, Barring brought financial order to Egypt. Ironically, the financial plan was the same as the ousted Khedive Isma‘il had proposed and Barring had refused as impossible. He introduced reforms and disbanded the Egyptian army and replaced it with a British–Indian model. Always suspicious of what he called “subject races,” Barring placed Englishmen in important positions rather than Egyptians, which earned him the hatred of the nationalists.

When Tawfiq was succeeded by ‘Abbas II Hilmi in 1892, Barring clashed with him almost immediately. ‘Abbas held strong nationalist views and opposed Barring’s high-handed manner. ‘Abbas was unable to impose his views on Egyptian policies set by the British and remained an opponent to Barring but the darling of the nationalists. In 1901, Barring was awarded the title of Lord Cromer and was at the height of his career. The 1906 Denshawai Affair, when British officers out hunting provoked a protest by delta villagers; eventually, several Egyptian peasants were executed. The new government in London thought a more humane approach should be used in Egypt. Seeing his time in Egypt coming to an end, Barring resigned his position in 1907.

**See also:** [Gordon, Charles George](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Khedive Isma‘il](#); [Khedive Tawfiq](#); [Kitchener, Horatio Herbert](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#).

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## BLUE NILE RIVER

Blue Nile is the most important tributary to the Nile River and provides most of the water that reaches the Mediterranean Sea. From its beginning at Lake Tana in the northern Ethiopian highlands, the river travels more than 900 miles (1,448 kilometers), cutting a deep canyon through the highlands before emerging onto the Sudanese plains to join the White Nile at Khartoum. The Blue Nile contributes about 60 percent of the Nile proper; most of its flow comes during the wet season when heavy monsoonal rainfall in the highlands swells rivers and streams and creates a tidal surge of water along the length of the Nile valley, depositing millions of tons of silt and mud. These annual floods gave rise to the ancient Egyptian civilization and remain vital to Egypt and Sudan even today. In Ethiopia, however, the fast-moving river is confined to a deep gorge and has been a fearsome and impassable barrier to travel and communication, which keeps parts of the country isolated. Only recently has Ethiopia begun to tap this vital resource.

The Blue Nile derives its name from its blackish appearance when laden with volcanic silt from the highlands. In Sudan, the local word for blue is the same as for black. In Arabic, the name for the Blue Nile is Bahr al Azraq. In Ethiopia, the river is known as Abbai (Abay) or Abbai Wenze, meaning “great river.” The source of the Abbai is sacred springs at Sakala at the foot of Mount Gish high in the Ethiopian highlands southwest of Lake Tana. The springs are a place of pilgrimage where offerings and sacrifice are made to the river. The Gilgel Abbai (“Little Abbai”) flows from the Sakala springs to Lake Tana. Its currents pass through the lake and out the southern tip where the Abbai Wenz begins. Several miles south of Lake Tana, the Abbai dramatically plunges over Tis Isat Falls into a narrow gorge of roiling water. For the next 400 miles (643 kilometers), the river is confined to the gorge and drops 4,500 feet (1,371 meters), receiving a number of large tributaries along the way. The river travels south over severe rapids and cataracts and through an area known as the Grand Canyon of the Nile, often compared to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado in the United States, though much more treacherous. The river continues to cut through gorges more



than 3,000 feet (914 meters) deep, bending west and then northwest. The bottom of the canyon is sweltering and malarial, home to crocodiles and hippos. Demons are believed to dwell in the river, and few Ethiopians go there with the notable exception of *shifita*—bandits. Few fords cross the river, and these have been used historically by caravans and slave traders. The Portuguese built two small bridges upstream in the 17th century, and now only two modern bridges cross the river further down at Shafartak and Bure. As the river leaves the highlands near the Sudan border villages and farms of the Gumuz, people appear along the river. In times past, the Gumuz were heavily raided as a source of slaves. Slavery lasted well into the 20th century.

## **Annual Flood**

The fertility and prosperity of Egypt depended on the annual Nile flood, and the country was plunged into famine and perhaps disease when the flood was weak or did not arrive at all. The annual flood was fed by the rains in the Ethiopian highlands that rush down the major tributaries of the Nile: the Sobat (into the White Nile), the Blue Nile, and the Atbara. The vast majority of the Nile's annual flow is in the Blue Nile, which supplies 59 percent of the water that reaches Egypt. The Blue Nile is highly seasonal in its flow, going from an extreme high to an extreme low most of the year.

The flow of the Blue Nile is so strong during the rainy season in Ethiopia that it blocks the White Nile until eventually the latter has enough force of weight to break the barrier. The two rivers continue to flow as separate streams for miles before their waters eventually mix. Because each stream has a particular color, the separate flows are visible; the White Nile being a chalky white and the Blue Nile nearly black. The colors are due to the silt in each stream. The rains further south in Central Africa do not supply much to the annual flood because their impact is dissipated in the Sudd. The Sudd increases as it absorbs the water, but little of it continues north to the annual flood of Egypt.

During the first four months of the ancient Egyptian year, floodwaters covered nearly everything within the valley. As a result, cities, towns, villages, and monuments were built on exposed hills or were protected by dams. During the flood season, it was possible to organize large bodies of workers to make the monuments for the pharaohs. As a result, Egypt had no real need for slaver labor despite what Hollywood shows. Slaves were used as household servants and in the military, but the monuments of ancient Egypt were built by its free people.

Leaving Ethiopia, the Blue Nile takes on a totally different personality. Flowing northwest through the plains of Sudan, the river broadens and slows as it passes through the land once dominated by the Funj Kingdom. Commercial as well as subsistence farms use the Blue Nile water with dams built in the 20th century at Sennar and Roseires for development of cotton schemes in the Gezira plain. As the river nears Khartoum, it receives two important tributaries, the Dinder and Rahad, which are sizable rivers that also originate in the Ethiopian highlands. At Khartoum, the Blue Nile joins the White Nile to form the Nile proper. The two rivers run side by side for several miles until their waters merge at last.

Finding the source of the Nile was an obsession for some humans even in ancient times. With little or no knowledge of the White Nile, the ancients considered the Blue Nile the main river with its source in Ethiopia. Even Alexander the Great sent expeditions to locate the source, but they failed. The first European to record seeing the springs of Sakala was Pedro Paes, a Jesuit

priest, who accompanied Emperor Susenyos to the sacred site in 1613. Still believing the Blue Nile to be the main river, James Bruce in 1770 made his way to Sakala to find the Nile's source. Discounting the Jesuit account, Bruce declared himself the discoverer of the source of the Nile. The river itself remained a mystery. Attempts to navigate the Abbai either upstream from Sudan or downstream from Lake Tana were halted by the narrow, treacherous gorges. Though the general course was somewhat known, the river was not mapped until the early 1930s when the British consul, R. E. Cheesman, undertook a survey of the river from the canyon rim. The first successful navigation of the Abbai was by a British team in 1968.

The Nile is life itself to Egypt, which claims a historic right to its waters. During the colonial era, Britain sought to develop the Gezira plain in Sudan into a commercial cotton scheme using irrigation water from the Blue Nile. In the Nile Waters Agreement of 1929 between Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, Egypt agreed to the building of the dam at Sennar in return for veto power over upstream projects. The agreement was updated in 1959, with Egypt and Sudan agreeing to fully share the river, which included an additional dam on the Blue Nile at Roseires. The agreement did not consider the rights of upper Nile states to share the resource. In 2010, the upper Nile states agreed on their rights to access the water. Ethiopia embarked on the building of the Grand Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile near its border with Sudan. When completed, it will be the largest hydroelectric dam in Africa. Egypt and Sudan complained bitterly, saying the dam violates the 1929 agreement and will result in diminished water supply. Although an agreement between the three countries was reached in March 2015, there is the likelihood of future conflicts over the Nile waters.

## **Roseires Dam**

In January 2013, Sudan opened the new Rosaries Dam on the Blue Nile at Damazin in the southeastern state known as Blue Nile. The project renovated the existing dam to expand agricultural development and power generation. The original dam, built in 1966, had become clogged with silt washed down from the Ethiopian highlands; although it produced 80 percent of Sudan's power, shortages often occurred. The new dam heightened the original by 33 feet (ten meters) and doubled its length to more than 15 miles (24 kilometers). The increased water storage will irrigate millions of acres of new farmland and boost power generation 40 to 50 percent.

The Blue Nile state is one of the poorest and most rebellious regions in Sudan, enduring brutal government attacks in its ongoing conflict with the Islamic government. It is hoped that the new dam will improve the economy and bring stability to the region.

**See also:** [Bruce, James](#); [Khartoum and Omdurman](#); [Lake Tana](#); [Sennar](#); [Tis Isat Falls](#).

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## BONAPARTE, NAPOLEON (1769–1821)

Napoleon Bonaparte commanded the French expedition that invaded Egypt in 1798. The French invasion caused three important events. First, Egypt emerged as a modern state under Muhammad 'Ali. Second, the expedition was accompanied by 160 scientists who studied, mapped, and drew illustrations of the entire country from Alexandria to Aswan and published a comprehensive study titled *Description de l'Egypte* from 1809 to 1828 in numerous volumes. Third, the French discovered the multilingual Rosetta Stone. Although they turned the stone over to the British in 1801, rubbings of it were used by Jean-Francois Champollion, who finally was able to translate it to make hieroglyphics live again.

Before Napoleon invaded Egypt, he had also planned to build a canal to link the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. He decided to present his invasion as a service to the Ottoman sultan and the Egyptian people by ridding them of the *Mamalik* (plural of *Mamluk*) and "returning" the province to good governance by the sultan. While on board ship crossing from Europe to Egypt, he had an announcement printed in Arabic declaring he was coming as a liberator (Moorehead 2000, pp. 67–68). The announcement declared that his war was only against the Mamalik, not against the people of Egypt or the Ottoman sultan. Al-Jabarti notes that the message, while trying to sound Islamic, did not use the usual phrase stating the Muhammad was the messenger of God. He says that it was clear the announcement was meant to ensure that all people of the three Abrahamic faiths that their religions would be respected, but al-Jabarti was sure this meant the French had no religion (al-Jabarti 1993, pp. 27–28). Al-Jabarti

spent several pages noting the mistakes in grammar and vocabulary made by French translators with Napoleon and thus dismisses the message altogether.

The French landed at Alexandria and had little trouble defeating the local garrison. Constantin François de Chassebœuf, the Comte de Volney, had traveled in the region extensively before the war and had intelligence on the Mamalik and their weapons, which gave Napoleon an advantage. Shortly after Napoleon landed his forces, the British naval fleet under Horatio Nelson defeated the French navy at Abu Qir, which the British romantically called the Battle of the Nile. Napoleon was now isolated in Egypt and could not retreat, but, being Napoleon, he advanced into Egypt and defeated the Mamalik several times before taking Cairo. The Mamalik stood to face the French at Imbabah, across the Nile from Cairo, in what Napoleon decided to call the Battle of the Pyramids. The Mamluk force was brave and among the best cavalries in the world but not a match for modern weapons. Once they lost the battle, surviving Mamalik fled to Sudan and Upper Egypt, which were beyond the limits of French control. French forces pushed up the Nile but did not venture beyond Aswan, leaving the rest under the control of Murad Bey, the Mamluk leader.

Once they controlled Cairo, the French found its people difficult to deal with. Napoleon hit on the idea passing himself off as a Muslim, dressing in the clothes of a bey, and calling a council of religious scholars to pass off French laws as being Islamic. None of this fooled the people, and the people of Cairo rose up against Napoleon only a few months after his arrival in the city. The people believed rumors that the Muslim religious endowments had been turned over to Christians to administer and subsequent violence led to the death of one of Napoleon's commanders. The revolt was crushed, however, although French troops committed many acts that were repulsive to the Egyptians.

In 1799, the Ottoman sultan sent two armies to eject the French from Egypt, one by land from Syria and the other by sea from Cyprus. The French met and defeated the expedition on sea that landed near Alexandria and felt obliged to try to invade Syria to stop the other. In Palestine, the French were defeated by a combined Ottoman and British force at Acre (al-Sayyad Marsot 2010, p. 60).

Napoleon received dire news from Europe. The French forces in Italy were in retreat, the island of Malta was under threat, and the Turks had taken the Ionian Islands. News arrived on a frigate that had made it to Alexandria, and Napoleon left his men in Egypt under the command of Jean-Baptiste Kléber, one of his ablest generals. In 1799, only one year after his arrival, Napoleon left for France taking some of the scientists with him. The remaining scientists stayed until

1801 when British and Ottoman troops forced their surrender and evacuation from the country. The scientists continued their work until the day of their departure.

**See also:** [Alexandria](#); [Cairo](#); [Egyptology](#); [Muhammad 'Ali](#).

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## BRUCE, JAMES (1730–1794)

James Bruce was a Scottish explorer who traveled to Ethiopia to find the source of the Nile in the late 18th century. He reached the source of the Blue Nile, maintaining that the Blue Nile was the main river and not a tributary. He incorrectly claimed he was the first European to visit the site and that he should be recognized as the discoverer of the source of the Nile. Bruce, however, never achieved the recognition and honor he felt he deserved, but his travels rekindled European interest in the Nile region, leading the way for the next generation of explorers who searched for the Nile's source.

Bruce was born in 1730, the eldest son of the laird of Kinnaird in Scotland. He was a robust six feet four inches and a skilled horseman and excellent marksman. He was adept at languages, studied drawing, and developed an interest in astronomy and ancient ruins. He took the post of consul general of Algiers in 1763 but stayed only two years. In Algiers, Bruce learned Arabic and Arab customs and picked up some medical knowledge. Over the next three years, he traveled in Tunisia, Libya, Crete, Anatolia, and Syria visiting and documenting Greek and Roman ruins. He also acquired additional medical skills. He then decided on an Ethiopian expedition and set out for Egypt, arriving in Cairo in June 1768.

In Cairo, Bruce prepared for his undertaking. He studied Ge'ez, the language of Ethiopia, and acquired scientific instruments. He visited dignitaries and received letters of recommendation from Ali Bey, the Mamluk ruler of Egypt, and the patriarch of Alexandria, head of the Ethiopian church. Finally, he set sail up the Nile to Aswan, joined a caravan to the Red Sea, explored coastal areas of Arabia, and finally arrived at the Ethiopian port of Massawa in September 1769. From Massawa, Bruce traveled inland along the trade route and arrived in the capital city of Gondar, north of Lake Tana, in February 1770.

Ethiopia at the time was a dangerous place. A regional lord, *Ras Mikael*, had recently murdered two emperors and assumed control over the new emperor and

the aging dowager empress. Other regional lords were also vying for power, and wars were constant. Europeans had not been welcome in Ethiopia, and few had entered in the preceding 100 years. Bruce, a tall impressive figure, arrived with letters from important personages, money, weapons, and medical skills that gained him favor with Mikael and the empress.

Bruce's goal, the Nile's source, was the springs at the foot of Mount Gish southwest of Lake Tana. These springs feed a small river that flows into Lake Tana and then exits the south end as the Blue Nile. In May, hoping to reach Mount Gish, Bruce joined *Ras* Mikael on a military expedition south of Gonder along the eastern side of Lake Tana. He did not reach his goal but did visit the magnificent Tis Isat Falls of the Blue Nile just south of the lake. Bruce made another attempt in October, traveling down the western side of Lake Tana. This time he succeeded and on November 4, 1770, arrived at the swamp fed by springs under Mount Gish. Bruce was elated. He stayed several days to take notes and make astronomical calculations. Back in Gonder, internal war delayed his departure from Ethiopia for a year. During this time, Bruce observed and noted Ethiopian life, wars, and court intrigue. He witnessed beheadings, mutilations, and castrations. He attended drunken feasts where he described eating raw meat cut from living cows. He studied Ethiopian history, sketched important buildings, visited churches, and acquired manuscripts. He collected seeds, drew plants and animals, and made scientific notations. Bruce was finally able to leave Gonder in December 1771.

Leaving Ethiopia, Bruce traveled west into the Sudanese desert. It was a hard journey. Bruce and his companions were subjected to fever, thirst, and hostile tribesmen, finally arriving at Sennar on the Blue Nile four months later and in weak condition. The Funj Kingdom of Sennar was in collapse. The city was dangerous, the climate hot and unhealthy. After several months, Bruce left Sennar in September 1772 to travel down the Blue Nile to the confluence of the Blue and White Niles at Khartoum and then beyond the Atbara River to Berber. From Berber, Bruce took a difficult caravan trail across the Nubian Desert to Aswan. Again, the group suffered illness, thirst, and attacks. Their camels died, and valuable equipment had to be abandoned. The 400-mile trek was completed in 18 days. Bruce arrived in Aswan sick and exhausted. Sailing down the Nile, Bruce eventually reached Cairo in January 1773.

Bruce did not return immediately to England. Instead he sailed to France where he was well received. He stayed for more than a year. He finally returned to London in June 1774. At first, he was a sensation and was elected to the Royal

Geographical Society. Soon, however, the inaccuracies and sensationalism of his stories, along with his boasting and vanity, drew critics. It was noted that he was not the first European to see the Blue Nile's source. Jesuit priests had been at the site more than 100 years earlier, though Bruce called them liars. The horrors of court life and cutting steaks from living cows were unbelievable tales. Luigi Balugani, his assistant and only witness of his journey, had died in Ethiopia. Angered by the ridicule, Bruce withdrew to Scotland. There he married, raised a family, and lived comfortably. After his wife died, he finally began to compile his notes and in 1790 published a five-volume book, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 & 1773*. It was widely read and translated but again drew criticism. It was unscholarly and confusing. There were embellishments and inaccuracies to a point that some readers doubted that he had actually been in Ethiopia. In disgust, he again withdrew to his estate and in April 1794 died from a fall down a flight of stairs.

**See also:** [Blue Nile River](#); [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Gonder](#); [Lake Tana](#); [Sennar](#).

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## BUGANDA

Buganda is an important kingdom in south-central Uganda on the northwestern shores of Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile River. Baganda (the Ganda people) have had a prominent role in shaping the history of Uganda, which takes its name from the kingdom. In the 19th century, Buganda was the largest and most influential kingdom in the upper Nile basin and the focus of foreign powers seeking to control the Nile's sources. The kingdom was friendly to Britain and thrived during colonial rule. Though the decades following independence were difficult for the whole nation, the Baganda have retained their importance as the largest ethnic group in Uganda, making up almost 20 percent of the population (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2002).

In Bugandan origin myths, the first human on Earth was Kintu. Kintu married Nambi, the daughter of the creator god in heaven, and together they began to populate the world despite the problems caused by Nambi's brother "Disease and Death." The founder of the Buganda Kingdom, Kato Kintu, perhaps adopted the mythical name to enhance his prestige. Kato Kintu invaded the region from the northeast in the 14th century and became the first *kabaka* (king) of Buganda. Prior to the 17th century, Buganda was a minor kingdom confined to a small area along Lake Victoria and hemmed in by its powerful neighbor, the Kingdom of Bunyoro. Strong clan leaders limited the authority of the *kabaka*, whose main role was to arbitrate disputes between clans. The lush, fertile landscape was ideal for cultivating bananas, which became the staple of the Bagandan diet. With plentiful food, the population grew rapidly. As Bunyoro faded around the mid-17th century, Bugandan armies began to win victories, bringing new territories into the kingdom. Rising in power, Buganda conducted wars of expansion over the next two centuries, greatly increasing its size in all directions, much at the expense of Bunyoro. The military included a fleet of war canoes on Lake

Victoria that maintained authority and controlled trade in the region. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the power of the *kabaka* greatly increased, and a centralized government formed with the *kabaka* and his advisory council, the *lukiko*, at the head. Clan chiefs were replaced with chiefs loyal to the throne, which governed areas that were subdivided and led by minor chiefs. In this way, an efficient rule of government developed. Because there was no caste system, anyone could rise in power and social prestige. A *kabaka* typically had many wives and rivals for the monarchy were usually numerous. A claimant routinely killed siblings and all other rivals to take the throne. By the 19th century, Buganda had replaced Bunyoro as the most important kingdom in the great lakes region and controlled territories on both sides of Lake Victoria's Nile waters.

The first outside contacts were with Arab trading caravans that penetrated inland in the mid-19th century from the east African coast. The traders brought firearms to exchange for ivory and slaves. With firearms, Buganda's military power increased. When John Hanning Speke passed through on his search for the Nile's source in 1862, he found a sophisticated realm with spacious reed houses and wide, manicured roadways ruled by Kabaka Mutesa I. Speke was impressed by Mutesa but found him extremely brutal. By the time Henry Morton Stanley visited a decade later in 1875, Arab influence had grown, and Egypt was on Buganda's borders with the intent of bringing the whole Nile basin under Egyptian control. To counter Muslim influence and the Egyptian threat, Mutesa requested British aid in the form of Christian missionaries that Stanley helped procure. A year later, English Protestant and French Catholic missionaries arrived, setting off a religious rivalry that engulfed the kingdom and led to armed conflict between Protestants and Catholics. The Christian wars weakened the authority of new Kabaka Mwanga, who was deposed by one side but later brought back by the other. Buganda was in a weakened state when Frederick Lugard arrived in 1890 at the head of the Imperial British East Africa Company expedition to annex the upper Nile for Britain. Mwanga made a treaty with Lugard in which he accepted British protection, but he later rejected the treaty and was deposed and exiled to the Seychelle Islands, where he died in 1903. Buganda became a protectorate in 1894, and Bagandan troops aided British forces in bringing surrounding kingdoms under British authority. A harsh campaign against Bunyoro resulted in Buganda gaining additional Bunyoro territory; these became known as the "Lost Counties." These counties became a continuous source of trouble.

Established in 1900, Britain's Uganda Protectorate was governed through the

system of indirect rule. British officials were in charge, but governing was carried out by local rulers and institutions. The protectorate included many kingdoms and principalities in the Lake Victoria and Victoria Nile region, but at the core was the Kingdom of Buganda, the most powerful kingdom with the largest population and friendly to Britain. Both Kampala, the capital city and commercial center, and Entebbe, headquarters of government, were located in Buganda territory. The Buganda kabaka was recognized as the head of state, and Bagandan administrators, especially Protestant, were used throughout the protectorate. The favoritism shown to Bagandans caused friction with other ethnic groups.

At independence in 1962, the question of leadership and the role of the kabaka were of major concern. The Buganda Kingdom pressed to become its own independent state, but its leadership, expertise, and economic role were too important to the rest of the country to allow secession. In the newly independent Uganda, the Buganda kabaka, Edward Frederick Mutesa II, became the country's first president; Milton Obote, from the smaller Langi tribe in the north, was made prime minister. Conflict between the two soon developed. Obote's troops, led by Idi Amin, attacked the royal palace in 1966, resulting in a massacre. The kabaka fled to England, where he died shortly after. The following year, Obote dissolved the kingdoms, ending centuries of cultural and historic tradition. Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin in 1971 to the initial joy of Bagandans, who hated Obote. But joy turned to fear as the economy collapsed and the brutalities of the Amin dictatorship emerged. Civil war erupted after Amin was overthrown, which left all of Uganda suffering. Democracy finally took hold in 1986 with the government under Yoweri Museveni; in 1994, the kingdoms were restored. The Kingdom of Buganda is now a cultural institution without a political role.

**See also:** [Bunyoro](#); [Idi Amin Dada](#); [Lake Victoria](#); [Mutesa I](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#); [Stanley, Henry Morton](#); [Museveni, Yoweri](#).

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## BUJAGALI FALLS

Bujagali Falls are the third in a series of short drops over exposed boulders and are regarded more as rapids than as falls. The first, now totally submerged by the Owen Falls Dam, is Ripon Falls, which was only 12 feet (four meters) high. In 1862, John Hanning Speke was the first European known to see them. Like the others on the Victoria Nile, the falls drop only a few feet before the river rushes on to the next falls. The second is Owen Falls, also called Nalubaale, which is 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) from Ripon. A dam was erected there in 1954 after complicated negotiations with Egypt over the amount of water that would be backed up by the dam and the amount that would flow on to irrigate Egypt's summer crop of cotton. Bujagali Falls is located six miles (10 kilometers) from the exit of the Nile at Lake Victoria (Ripon Falls). It also is a series of short falls, again only 12 feet (four meters) over boulders that are more rapids than falls. Until recently, they had been used by adventure tourists eager for white water experiences.

As the Owen Falls dam aged, numerous leaks led to near collapse. The Ugandan government and the World Bank agreed that a new dam was needed to supply Ugandan and Kenyan electrical needs. In 2007, the plan was approved by the World Bank over the objections of environmentalists, Ugandan nongovernmental organizations, and others. In 2012, the construction work was finished and the dam was inaugurated by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who had pushed for the dam's construction. This was the second plan to build a dam at Bujagali; the first plan never came to fruition because of massive objections from local people and a lack of funds. The second plan cost more than \$800 million, some \$300 million over the initial planned cost. The World Bank

and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development were important backers of the idea.

Bujagali Falls had an interesting resident who opposed building the dam. Ja Ja Nabamba Budhagali, who was named for the spirit of the river, was 95 years old in 2013, although other sources placed his age in the 80s (Twigger 2013, p. 34). He was the 30th incarnation of the spirit of the falls and took his role seriously. He effected medical cures using indigenous plants and spoke to spirits. During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the bodies of people killed by the Hutus and dumped into Lake Victoria piled up along the rocks of the falls, and he buried every one of them. He had five shrines near his home village, also called Budhgali, where he could be consulted.

**See also:** [Lake Victoria](#); [Mutesa I](#); [Speke](#), [John Hanning](#).

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## BUNYORO

The Kingdom of Bunyoro is one of the oldest kingdoms of the upper Nile regions of Uganda. The kingdom lies to the south of the Victoria Nile and east of Lake Albert in the north-central region of Uganda. Bunyoro, also known as Bunyoro-Kitara, was once the largest and most powerful kingdom in the region, but its power weakened with the rise of the Kingdom of Buganda. Bunyoro fought to maintain its independence against foreign powers, which were determined to control the sources of the Nile. It was ultimately defeated and incorporated into the Britain's Uganda Protectorate, which is now simply Uganda.

Oral traditions refer to three Bunyoro dynasties. The earliest was the Tembuluzi (Abatembuzi), a legendary godlike dynasty that ruled for several generations. The last Tembuluzi king, according to legend, married the daughter of the ruler of the underworld, leaving his kingdom in the hands of his chief herdsman. Several years later, the herdsman's daughter fell in love with the old king's son from the underworld. Their son returned to the kingdom, killed the herdsman, his grandfather, and assumed the throne as the first king of the new Chwezi dynasty. The Chwezi (Bachwezi) were aristocratic cattle herders who invaded from the north in the 14th century and established the powerful medieval Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara throughout western Uganda. They are said to have introduced the long-horned Ankole cattle to the region, the cultivation of coffee, and iron smelting. In the 16th century, the Chwezi were pushed out by the Bito (Babito) dynasty, part of the migrating Lwo people from the Nile valley of Sudan. The Bito Dynasty has survived to the present.

At the head of Bunyoro's government was the *omukama* (king) who presided over a loose federation of provinces each led by a chief appointed by the *omukama*. The provinces were divided into smaller areas overseen by lesser chiefs. Provincial chiefs administered the provinces, collected tribute, and provided warriors for the *omukama*'s army. At its height, Bunyoro dominated the kingdoms of Ankole and Toro to the south and southwest up to the borders

of Rwanda and to the shores of Lake Victoria. Power began to shift in the late 17th and 18th centuries with the rise of the Kingdom of Buganda on the northwestern shores of Lake Victoria. Buganda and Bunyoro became archenemies, and wars between the two kingdoms were frequent. In the 18th century, the Bunyoro army suffered defeat during a raid into Rwanda in which the Bunyoro king was killed. Dynastic disputes over succession also weakened the kingdom, giving Buganda opportunity to attack and seize Bunyoro territory. As Buganda expanded through the 18th and early 19th centuries, Bunyoro diminished in size and power, with Ankole and Toro breaking away.

The first Europeans to visit Bunyoro were John Hanning Speke and James Grant, who were received by the *omukama* Kamrasi in 1862 after their discovery of the Nile source at Lake Victoria. Hearing of other lakes that might be connected to the Nile, Samuel Baker set off in 1863 to explore Bunyoro and an unknown lake he named "Albert." In the late 1860s, Kamrasi was succeeded by his son Kabarega (Kabalega), a powerful leader who regained some of Bunyoro's former territories and may have restored Bunyoro's former greatness had foreign powers not intervened. In 1872, Baker returned at the head of a military expedition to annex Bunyoro for the Turco-Egyptian empire. Kabarega was defiant and forced Baker and his expedition to withdraw. Baker was followed by Charles "Chinese" Gordon, who had plans to annex the entire upper Nile regions for Egypt but only managed to establish a few forts near the Bunyoro border with Sudan. At the same time, Henry Morton Stanley, after exploring Lake Victoria in 1875, entered Bunyoro to explore more of the lakes to the west. He was halted at Lake George by Kabarega's warriors and forced to turn south out of Bunyoro.

In 1890, an expedition of the Imperial British East African Company led by Frederick Lugard arrived. Lugard made treaties with the king of Buganda and tried to annex Bunyoro but met resistance from Kabarega. After Britain made a protectorate of Buganda, British forces attacked Bunyoro aided by Baganda warriors. Kabarega led a guerilla war against the invading forces for several years. The war was brutal for Bunyoro. Agriculture was destroyed, and famine broke out, causing widespread devastation. Kabarega was finally defeated in 1899 and exiled to the Seychelle Islands in the Indian Ocean. As a reward for helping Britain seize Bunyoro, Buganda was given six Bunyoro counties that were culturally significant, including the burial tombs of Bunyoro kings. They became known as the "Lost Counties" and were the source of hostility even after independence. Under the British protectorate, Bunyoro was forced to accept

Bagandan administrators and adopt the Baganda language, which resulted in a rebellion in 1907. Gradually, relations improved, and a treaty between the kingdom and Britain was adopted in 1933. The 80-year-old Kabarega was allowed to return but died along the way at Jinja on Lake Victoria. He was buried in Bunyoro.

Uganda became independent in 1962. Two years after independence, a referendum was finally held in the Lost Counties with a majority of Banyoro (Nyoro people) to determine if they would rejoin Bunyoro or stay part of Buganda. The vote was overwhelmingly to return to Bunyoro. The Bugandan king, Mutesa II, at the time the president of the new country, strongly opposed the referendum. As a result, the coalition government fell apart, and in 1966 the Buganda king was forced to flee the country. The next year Prime Minister Milton Obote abolished all kingdoms, and Uganda became a republic. Obote was later overthrown by Idi Amin, whose brutal dictatorship and resulting civil war brought hardships to the entire country. Finally, in the mid-1980s under Yoweri Museveni, the county began to move toward a more peaceful democracy. In 1994, the kingdoms were restored but without a political role. The *omukama* is now a ceremonial leader who promotes the welfare of the Nyoro people in the “cultural” Kingdom of Bunyoro.

**See also:** [Buganda](#); [Museveni](#), [Yoweri](#); [Speke](#), [John Hanning](#); [Stanley](#), [Henry Morton](#).

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## BURTON, SIR RICHARD FRANCIS (1821–1890)

Richard Francis Burton was a British explorer and travel writer whose quarrel with John Hanning Speke over the source of the Nile made both men famous. Burton's contention was that the Nile had more than one source and that it arise from several lakes. Speke claimed that Lake Victoria, as he named the Nulabaale or Nyanza, was the one source.

Burton began his career in the Indian army, where his ability in languages allowed him to assume a local disguise as Mirza 'Abdallah that fooled both local people and his fellow officers. He participated in an undercover investigation into British soldiers' use of a brothel in Karachi where boys were prostituted. He received approval from the Royal Geographic Society and the East India Company to explore parts of Arabia, and he decided to make the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1853. Published in 1855 as *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, the book won him fame. Although not the first European to visit the holy places of Islam, his book is the most famous of such exploits. He went in disguise as a Pashtun (not an Arab as is often thought), underwent circumcision to avoid creating suspicion, and was nearly exposed by an Indian pilgrim in Mecca.



**Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890) became a rival of John Hannnig Speke over the source of the Nile. Burton refused to recognize Lake Victoria as the source and supposed the Nile arose from a number of sources. (Library of Congress)**

After returning to Cairo, he traveled to India to take up his service with the East India Company but was soon released again for a mission supported by the Royal Geographic Society to Somalia. He was able to visit the town of Harar and made it safely back to the coast where he picked up a party that included Lieutenant John Hanning Speke. His party was attacked by Somali warriors, and many in the British party were killed, captured, and wounded, including both Burton and Speke. The expedition was a failure, and the next year Burton was investigated to see to what extent he was to blame for the disaster.

In 1856, another expedition was funded by the Royal Geographic Society, and both Burton and Speke were included. Before leaving for Africa, Burton was



engaged to Isabel Arundell. Her mother, an ardent Catholic, did not approve of the marriage because Burton was neither Catholic nor wealthy. The expedition set off in 1856 and arrived at Lake Tanganyika in 1858. Speke made a journey north and “discovered” a large lake that he named Victoria after the British monarch, but he did not go round the lake to determine if it was the source. This began the bitter debate between the two men, Burton sure that the source would prove to be a series of lakes and Speke feeling equally sure he had found the source. Isabel and Richard married in a private Catholic service on his return to England.

A second expedition to the lake was organized by the Royal Geographical Society that was put under the command of Speke and James Grant, not Burton. With nothing else to do, in 1860 Burton traveled to the United States and visited the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Feeling insulted by not being put in command of the return expedition to the Nile’s source, Burton chose to criticize the work of Speke and Grant, whose lack of complete survey work and failure to follow the course of the Nile after its exit from Lake Victoria left the source in doubt. A debate by the two men was arranged in 1864. However, the day before the debate was scheduled, Speke died in a hunting accident. Burton continued to criticize the “poor geography” of Speke until he died even though others proved that the Nile’s source is Lake Victoria, but Burton was also proven right in that several lakes feed the river.

From 1861 until his death in 1890, Burton worked for the British foreign service in posts such as Equatorial Guinea and Brazil until 1869 when he was made British consul in Damascus. In 1872, he was transferred to Trieste in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He continued to write and publish (*The Kama Sutra* in 1883 and *The One Thousand and One Nights* in 1884), living a peaceful and quiet life until his death in 1890. He was knighted in 1886.

**See also:** [Baker, Samuel, and Baker, Florence](#); [Grant, James Augustus](#); [Lake Victoria](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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# C

## **CAIRO**

Cairo is one of the world's great cities with a population of more than 20 million people. Its growth is so fast that counting the total number of people who live there is proving impossible. It is the largest city in the Arab world and the largest city in the Middle East, being larger than Istanbul, and the largest in Africa after recently overtaking Lagos, Nigeria. The city has outgrown the narrow confines of the Nile valley and stretches into the desert both east and west. Its growth threatens the Giza plateau and the pyramids, spreading with a flood of illegal and unofficial housing around it. It occupies three Egyptian provinces: Cairo, Qalubiyah to the north, and Giza across the Nile to the west. Today it also includes a southern suburb, the city of Helwan, as well as other, smaller villages the city is eating up.

## History

Cairo was founded by the Fatimid Dynasty (ruled 909–1171) in 969. Originally from Tunisia, the family conquered Egypt and then built a new imperial capital named *al-Qahirah* or “The Victorious.” However, Cairo has a much longer history. The first capital of a united Egypt under Pharaoh Menes (3100 BCE) was established only 29 miles (47 kilometers) south along the western bank of the river. It was built where Upper Egypt meets Lower Egypt, and it remained a major center well into the Roman era. Memphis or *Mennufer* was the name of the pyramid built for Pharaoh Pepy I (ruled 2321–2287 BCE), and later the entire city was given the same name (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 134). In the New Kingdom, the city was named *Hikuptah*, or the Temple of Ptah, which would give rise to the name *Egypt* for the country and *Coptic* for the language and Christianity of its people via the Greek corruption to *Aigyptos* and the Latin *Aegyptus*.

Little is left of the mud brick city built by the pharaohs other than a few stone monuments, many of these dating into the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE). Today the ancient capital of Egypt lies under a thick layer of silt at the village of Mit Rahinah, but the grand funerary temples and tombs are found nearby at Saqqarah, Dahshur, Abu Sir, the sun temple of Zawiyat al-‘Aryan, and the great pyramids of Giza. They are decorated with numerous scenes of everyday life, and many still have intact original vivid colors.

Under Roman Emperor Augustus (ruled 27 BCE–14 CE), a new garrison was built across the river at Babylon. Today this is part of Cairo’s great urban sprawl and is known as Misr al-Qadimah or Old Cairo. Within its walled area are several churches, a synagogue, a monastery, and a cemetery for Christians. Misr al-Qadimah is contained in the walls of the Roman fort of Babylon or more correctly “Bab il-On” or the “Gate to On,” which was known as the “City of the Sun” of late antiquity. Its ruins are under the houses and streets of the Cairo neighborhood of Heliopolis. When the Arabs came to Egypt, Babylon was key to the occupation because of its strategic position on the Nile, and it was much more important than the capital, Alexandria.

The Arabs were assisted in their occupation of Egypt by the local Christians who had been persecuted by the Byzantine state and church over matters of faith. The Copts saw the Byzantines as occupiers, and the local church leaders were replaced by Greek priests. The Arab leader, ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, brought back the Coptic priests and installed the Coptic pope once again on the bishop of

Alexandria's throne. To house his men, 'Amr moved to just north of the fort and established his city of Fustat. He also built the first mosque in Egypt as well as Africa that was large enough to hold his army at prayer. His mosque stands today on the same site, but it has been rebuilt numerous times over the centuries and no longer has any original part (Parker *et al.* 1988, p. 51).

In 750, the Umayyads (ruled 661–750) were overthrown by their cousins, the 'Abbasids (ruled 750–1258), who set about building a new quarter for their troops out of distrust of the people of Fustat who were suspected of being pro-Umayyad. The escaped Umayyad prince 'Abd al-Rahman was known to have passed through Egypt in his eventual flight to pro-Umayyad Spain. The new area was built just to the north of Fustat and was called *al-'Askar* or the "military camp," but the city was quickly overcome by the growth of Fustat and was buried inside it (Al-Sayyad 2011, p. 46). Like Fustat, *al-'Askar* did have a central mosque and a large square, but both have disappeared.

In 870, the 'Abbasid *khalifah* (caliph) appointed a Turkish commander, Ahmad ibn Tulun, as governor of Egypt (Haag 2006, p. 6). Ibn Tulun built a new capital just to the north of Fustat called *al-Qata'i* or "the divisions," and there he built his own great mosque. The ibn Tulun mosque brought with it several new ideas from Iraq: the minaret has an external winding staircase that makes it look like the Great Mosque at Samarra, and there is a *ziyadah*, or additional space, between the inside and outside walls of the mosque like a dry moat. Ibn Tulun had his mosque decorated with stucco work, again echoing that of 'Abbasid Iraq. However, his dynasty did not last, and the 'Abbasid *khalifah* was able to regain direct control in 905.

Fustat once again grew, and *al-Qata'i* was abandoned. The ibn Tulun mosque lay in ruins until the Mamluk period when the *amir* Husam al-Din Lajin restored it in 1296. 'Abbasid power diminished, and Egypt once again became nearly independent under the Turkish Ikshidid Dynasty, which lasted until the conquest by the Fatamids in 969. Shortly after the conquest, the Fatamid *khalifah* (caliph) ordered a new city built farther to the north and laid out in a rectangle. However, because the laying of the wall lines was finished at night, it is slightly narrower on the northern end; but because it was laid out during a Friday night during the month of Ramadan, it was decided to not correct the error since Friday is the Muslim holy day and Ramadan a holy month (Al-Sayyad 2011, p. 60).

During the Fatamid period, the city of *al-Qahirah* was for the royal family, the court, and the military; the rest of the people continued to live in Fustat. In 970,

construction began on the great mosque, al-Azhar, which was finished three years later. Although it began as an Isma‘ili Shi‘ite mosque, it was known since the time of Salah al-Din (ruled 1169–1193) as the main university mosque of Sunni Islam. It began as a place to train Isma‘ili missionaries and was built to be both a mosque and university, making it the oldest university in the world. Today it also teaches similar subjects as any other university in addition to being the Sunni world’s premier producer of scholars. The Fatamid period produced many important buildings, including the stone walls that surround it, built between 1087 and 1092 by Badr al-Din al-Jamali based on Syrian and Byzantine models (Al-Sayyad 2011, p. 70).



**Al-Azhar was founded in 972 CE by the Fatamids when they moved from Tunisia to Egypt. Originally built for the Isma‘ili Shi‘ism of the Fatamids, in the 12th century it became the main mosque and university of Sunni Islam. The photo shows the later Mamluk gate and minarets. (Paul Cowan/Dreamstime.com)**

Following the rule of al-Mustansir (1036–0194), the Fatamids were in decline and various court ministers took control. The dispute between two of them brought in outside forces to assist; Shawar was ousted by his rival, Dirgham, and Shawar first turned to the new power in Syria, Nur al-Din Zangi (ruled 1146–1174) but then decided to ask help of the king of Jerusalem, Amalric I (ruled 1163–1174). In fear of the Crusader army, Fustat was ordered burned. Parts of Fustat were spared the fire, but most of the city was destroyed. The Crusader army never came because it was ambushed and forced to return by the Syrian army led by Shirkuh and his nephew Salah al-Din. Both rival ministers were removed, and Shirkuh took their place. Several months later, Shirkuh died

leaving the affairs of state to his able nephew who allowed the last Fatamid *khalifah*, al-‘Adid, to end his days in peace in 1171.

Salah al-Din ruled in the name of Nur al-Din but once his overlord died, he declared his independence and began the Ayyubid Dynasty that would rule Egypt and Syria until 1260. Cairo was a joint capital with Damascus, and both cities were endowed with massive building projects. In Cairo, Salah al-Din began the building of the citadel on a cliff overlooking the city and enclosed the entire city within a wall. To allow the citadel to withstand siege, he ordered the digging of a well, Bi’r Yusuf, 87 meters (285 feet) deep that brought water to the surface using two tiers of waterwheels powered by oxen (Lyster 2002, p. 11).



**The ruins of Fustat, the first Arab city in Egypt, founded in 641 CE in the southern part of Cairo, often called Misr al-‘Atiqah, or ancient Cairo. Fustat was partially destroyed by fire in 1168 to stop the advance of the Crusader King Amalric I of Jerusalem. (John A. Shoup)**

Salah al-Din was a Sunni and encouraged the spread of Sunni Islam among the common people, built mosques, and more importantly, schools or *madrasahs*, to teach Sunni beliefs and replace Isma‘ili Shi‘ism. As the capital of the state, Cairo was endowed with a large number of *madrasahs*, something the following Mamalik continued to do. Little of the Ayyubid buildings remain other than three structures: the tomb of Shajarat al-Durr, the remarkable woman who ruled Egypt (1250–1257) until the ‘Abbasid *khalifah* refused to recognize a woman and she was forced to marry Aybak, a Mamluk *amir*; the tomb and madrasah of al-Salih Najm al-Din al-Ayyubi, the first husband of Shajarat al-Durr, of which the main entrance and dome remain; and the tomb and shrine of Imam al-Shafi‘i, founder of the main Sunni school followed in Syria and Egypt.

The tombs of Imam al-Shafi‘i and al-Salih Najm al-Din both have wooden domes topped with a small carved wooden boat filled with seeds for birds. The boat-shaped top seems to be the last vestige of the pharaonic sun boat that takes souls to the afterlife. The shrine of Imam Shafi‘i is the site of a major celebration to mark the birth of the great man called a *mulid* and is a major Muslim and Sunni pilgrimage site in Egypt.

The Ayyubids were followed by the Mamalik, who were not dynasties because leadership went to one of a number of rival *amirs* or military commanders rather than from father to son. They are divided into two main groups: the Bahri (ruled 1250–1382) and the Burji (ruled 1382–1517). They were from different ethnic backgrounds, the Bahri being from Turkish and Mongol origins and the Burji mainly Circassians from the Caucasus. At the lower level of education, they introduced the *kuttab* or primary school, and many of these also served as public fountains (*sabil*), starting the tradition in Cairo of the *sabil-kuttab* institution endowed by wealthy people. They produced much of Cairo’s greatest architecture in mosques, sabil-kuttab, *madrasahs*, and *khanqahs* (places for Sufi mystics to study); *wikalahs* (places for merchants from outside of Cairo to sell their goods and live), which are also called *khans*; tombs, hospitals, palaces, and bathhouses. Cairo remained the capital, with Damascus playing less of a role and each *amir* wanting to demonstrate his faith by building monuments for public use. As a result, only Istanbul has more minarets than Cairo.

During the Mamluk period, architecture developed and, by building in stone, their monuments were built to last. They developed a style of highly developed minarets that allow them to be both tall and narrow (using an octagonal form on top of a square) using delicate marble columns at the tops and highly carved stone domes. In fact, in some of the later Mamluk buildings, the domes are so tall and narrow they are much like minarets themselves; a good example is the mausoleum of Yunus al-Dawadar (Parker *et al.* 1988, p. 92). Their style was chosen as the Egyptian national style for public buildings in the late 19th century and endures to this day. They developed marble inlays, a mark of Mamluk buildings. Brought from Syria to Egypt, the intricate cut stone in alternating colors (white and black or white and red) is called *ablaq* and was originally used to mean a piebald (pinto) horse, demonstrating the Mamalik love of horses. They also brought from Syria and Iran tall portals called *pishtaq* in Persian and decorated them with numerous small triangular indentations called *muqarnas*. Because Cairo was already built up, they had to be more ingenious in



constructing buildings in confined spaces, so nearly all Mamluk buildings are tall and several stories, whereas older buildings are low and wide.

During the Mamluk period, Cairo's population hovered around 500,000 despite the plagues that hit the medieval world, which made it one of the largest cities at the time. The city was able to push toward the west as the banks of the Nile moved. Some of the areas to the west allowed pools of freshwater to fill during the yearly floods, and the lake at 'Azbakiyyah became a favorite for Mamluk palaces (Raymond 2001, p. 110; Behrens-Abouseif 2007, p. 54). No longer fearing attack, the Mamalik allowed expansion outside the walls and even built a new harbor for river traffic called *al-Maqs*.

The last Mamluk sultan was Qansuh al-Ghawri, who also built massive buildings even though his reign was only 15 years long. Among his most important contribution to the city was the aqueduct that brought water to the citadel. Originally built by al-Nasir Muhammad in 1311, it was expanded and renewed by Qansuh al-Ghawri in 1505 (Parker *et al.* 1988, p. 55). It had a massive tower with several large waterwheels that lifted water to the top of Salah al-Din's walls. It is near the entrance to the canal that had been called *al-Khalij* or "the gulf" that was opened with the annual flood and had been a major part of Cairo's water supply until the 1970s (Haag 31). The opening was accompanied with fireworks, music, and decorated river craft.

The Ottoman period did not produce the same number of buildings mainly because Cairo was a provincial capital, although many mosques, *sabil-kuttab*s, and tombs were added to the extensive Mamluk list. The first Ottoman period of building used local styles such as at the *sabil-kuttab* of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda built in 1744 (Parker *et al.* 1988, p. 211). However, the Ottomans did introduce the large contained prayer hall without the usual hypostyle hall with numerous columns. The best examples of this are the mosque of Sinan Pasha built in 1571, the mosque of Sulayman Pasha built in 1528, and the much later mosque of Muhammad 'Ali built between 1824 and 1848. The river moved continuously to the west, and a new port, Bulaq, was built on the river. One of the best Ottoman mosques, the mosque of Sinan Pasha, was built there for merchants to use. The Ottomans continued to use the gardens and pools for expansive villas; when Napoleon invaded, he turned one of them into his house and another over to scholars for the first Egyptian institute.

## Modern Cairo

Cairo remained a “medieval” city into the 19th century when Khedive Isma‘il decided to build a modern city modeled after Paris built around several squares—actually, circles with radiating streets. He used the opening of the Suez Canal to embark on his massive scheme. He wanted to showcase Egypt as a modern state with state-of-the-art urban planning. To do this, he used the lands that were exposed as the Nile retreated to the west side, filled in most of the natural pools, and replaced them with gardens that were the envy of European cities. He built wide avenues lined with trees, and new neighborhoods grew up for Cairo’s elite and European residents. He even built a new palace, Qasr ‘Abdin, and left the citadel to live in his new, modern Cairo. He built bridges over the Nile connecting Cairo on the east bank with Giza on the west bank, and improved the existing railway station. He also built two palaces for visiting dignitaries to use while in Egypt for the opening of the canal in 1869: the al-Jazirah Palace on Zamalik Island and the Mena House at the Giza pyramids. His modern Cairo included some of the world’s first major department stores with the most modern of sales techniques: Sidnawi’s and ‘Umar Effendi. In 1911, Tirings Department Store opened on ‘Atabah Square, the dividing point between what was called “Islamic Cairo” to the east and “European Cairo” to the west.

Later the area called “Garden City” was built using the garden city plan that was in vogue in the post–World War I era. It has winding streets lined with large shade trees and was home to many of the city’s elites. Large comfortable villas and apartment blocks were built. During World War II, the British army headquarters was located in Garden City as was the British embassy, which remains there to this day. Zamalik Island became a nearly exclusive British area, and troops were stationed there. Nonetheless, elite Egyptian families built or bought villas there, and many art deco apartment complexes were also built on Zamalik. Cairo became one of the major sites for art deco architecture of the 1930s.

## Contemporary Period

When Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir (Gamal Abdel Nasser) came to power in 1953, he embarked on several plans that changed the nature of the city. He focused on public buildings for the ordinary people and not just the elite. He built whole new neighborhoods for the middle class and the poor. Among his most successful housing projects is the neighborhood of Muhandisin or a housing area

for engineers. He also built one for journalists called *Sahafiin*, but little of it remains. In lower-income areas, he built large apartment complexes; although the actual living spaces were small, they were all connected to public facilities. Those for lower-income families are easily recognizable for being tall and narrow. However, the city's population growth was much larger than expected, and public housing could not keep up with the demand.

When al-Nasir died, his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, opened up the Egyptian economy and, using Western models, withdrew from public housing and left it for private investors to drive the market. This has produced today's situation in which a large part of the population lives in informal and illegal housing districts called *'ashwa'iyyat*. An estimated 44 percent of Cairo's population lives in informal or illegal housing, though the percentage could be much higher (Sims 2012, p. 33). Today, Cairo is "three cities in one," to borrow a phrase from David Sims's excellent text on the city, *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City Out of Control*. It consists of formal Cairo, which includes the historic city and government-built formal housing, the informal sector that holds the largest percentage of Cairo's inhabitants, and relatively new desert developments with the smallest percentage of inhabitants. The desert developments began with the British, who established Heliopolis in the 1940s. However, the impetus for desert development began in earnest with Sadat's 1974 plan (Sims 2012, p. 74). This plan was for the private sector to build cities known as 6th of October, 10th of Ramadan, and al-'Ubar that were well outside of then existing Cairo. They were planned as sleeper cities with little to no facilities, not even shops, though it was hoped factories would locate there and hire the people. This plan has continued with the building of numerous gated communities for the elite that are generally empty, though Cairo's poor are crammed into tiny apartments or illegal housing. In March 2015, plans were announced to build a "new capital" outside of Cairo that will be a "New New Cairo" because *Misr al-Jadidah* or "New Cairo" already exists. In early January 2016, two Chinese companies signed the agreement to help build the new capital.

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Ancient](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Islamic Monuments](#); [Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [Khedive Tawfiq](#); [Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat](#); [Muhammad Husni Mubarak](#).

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## CATARACTS OF THE NILE

The Nile River runs through several rapids or cataracts, a Greek term that means white water, rapids, and even waterfalls. The ancient Egyptians numbered them starting with the First Cataract near Aswan and then progressively numbering them as they proceed up the Nile. The First Cataract traditionally marked the southern border of Egypt, and the other cataracts were considered to be in Nubia. There are six total cataracts, although the second cataract is now under Lake Nasser just north of the Sudanese town of Wadi Halfa. The Sixth Cataract is located south of the ancient site of Meroe.



The Nile has six cataracts, or rapids, where a rise in the riverbed brings rocks close to the surface. The First Cataract (numbered north to south) is at Aswan and marked the furthest southern limit of ancient Egypt. ([Edwardje/Dreamstime.com](#))

Because the northern Sudanese landmass between Aswan and Khartoum is tectonically active, the river's floor has risen over the centuries to expose boulders and rocky islets. The shallow nature of the river gives the Nile in northern Sudan the characteristics of a new river with shallows and rapids. The cataracts have always been navigable by light river craft such as the felucca or the reed boats of ancient Egypt and Nubia. In the 19th century, when river steamers were introduced by the Egyptians, they were able to pass through the cataracts even during periods of low water. In the past, when sail-powered and oar-powered ships were used, the constant breeze from the north propelled ships south against the current; on the trip north, the Nile's current propelled the ships over the cataracts.

In the past, the portion of the Nile between Khartoum and Aswan was called the "Cataract Nile," and the smoother region between Aswan and the Mediterranean Sea was called the "Egyptian Nile." North of Aswan, the Nile's bottom is made of soft sediment formed some 5.5 million to 23 million years ago in the Miocene epoch. The Eonile or ancient Nile carved a deep canyon when the Mediterranean was cut off from the Atlantic that has now been filled with river sediment.

For the peoples living along the Nile, the cataracts were excellent places to establish forts and trading stations. During the Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BCE), the Egyptians extended their control over Lower Nubia and built a massive fort at Buhen on the Second Cataract (modern Qasr Ibrim) that was rebuilt time and again and was garrisoned by Ottoman troops into the 19th century. Aswan, a major trading city in Upper Egypt, was built near the First Cataract. During the New Kingdom, Egyptian control was pushed to the Fifth Cataract by Thutmose III (ruled 1479–1425 BCE). Each subsequent expansion was marked with new forts and trade centers. Today, the Egyptian–Sudanese border runs along the latitude of the Second Cataract.

**See also:** [Aswan](#); [Blue Nile River](#); [Felucca \(Falukkah\)](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## CHURCHILL, WINSTON (1874–1965)

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill was born to an upper-class English family and was schooled but did poorly at Harrow School, an elite boarding school. His father, Randolph, placed him in military training. It took him three attempts to pass the entrance exams for Sandhurst Military College. He did well at Sandhurst and earned his father's respect and attention, but his father died before the relationship could blossom. In 1895, Winston earned his commission in the Fourth Hussars and also became a foreign correspondent.

In 1898, he sailed with his regiment to India and fought in the Northwest Frontier (now in Pakistan) close to the Afghan border. He produced the first of his many books, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*. His regiment was then assigned to Kitchener's reconquest of Sudan. A confirmed imperialist to the end, Churchill's descriptions of colonized people was often colored with the attitude of the time, but in his book on the Sudan campaign he showed surprising sympathy for the Arabs and other peoples of Sudan despite his use of words such as "savages," "barbarians," and "fuzzy wuzzies" (Churchill 1902). His descriptions of the engagement between British and the Sudanese forces is worthy of quoting: "Suddenly the whole black line which seemed to be the *zeriba* began to move. It was made of men, not bushes. Behind it other immense masses and lines of men appeared over the crest; while we watched, amazed at the wonder of the sight, the whole face of the slope became black with the swarming savages" (Moorhead 2000, p. 370). His own regiment, the 21st Lancers, had ridden ahead of the British line and stumbled on to the forces of 'Uthman Diqna hidden in a gully. The two forces fought a hotly contested battle before 'Uthman's men withdrew. The battle ended and some 10,000 Sudanese lay dead or dying on the field (Barthorp 1984, p. 169).

After the war in Sudan, Churchill went on to South Africa and served as a war correspondent during the Boer War. He was captured and escaped from the Boer-held lands into British-held Rhodesia (modern Zimbabwe) and became a well-known figure in Great Britain. He began his political career and moved up the ladder until, as lord of the admiralty, he miscalculated and led Britain into the disaster of Gallipoli in 1915. He then resigned and served on the front. The

rest of his career had little to do with the Nile other than as an advocate of British imperial control until the day he died in 1965.

**See also:** [Gordon, Charles George](#); [Kitchener, Horatio Herbert](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#); [‘Uthman Digna](#).

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## COPTIC CHRISTIANITY

The term “Copt” comes from *Aigyptos*, the Greek word for Egypt, which was taken from *Hak-Ka-Ptah*, an ancient name for the pharaonic capital of Memphis. Copts (Egyptians) are descendants of ancient Egyptians, and the Coptic language has been handed down from the time of the pharaohs. The Coptic Orthodox Church began in Egypt in the first century CE and had a prominent role in the development of early Christianity. Monasticism, the secluded life of monks and nuns, had its beginnings in Egypt and was later adopted throughout Christendom. From Egypt, the Coptic faith spread to the kingdoms of Nubia in Sudan and the Aksumite Kingdom in the northeastern highlands of Ethiopia (Abyssinia). The advance of Islam in the seventh century caused a decline in the church in Egypt and almost erased the church in Sudan. In Ethiopia, the faith withstood outside pressures and remains embedded in Ethiopian culture.



## Egypt

Tradition credits Saint Mark with the founding of Christianity in Alexandria around 40 CE. At the time, Egypt was an impoverished province of the Roman Empire, and Christianity offered salvation and a better life. The new faith had similarities with the ancient Egyptian religion such as resurrection (seen in the story of Osiris), the symbol of the cross (the Egyptian *ankh*), and the madonna and child (Isis and her son, Horus). Egyptians also felt connected with the holy family who took refuge in Egypt while Jesus was an infant. Christianity spread quickly, and the Alexandrian church, headed by a pope or patriarch, became an influential center of Eastern Christianity. Christendom's first religious school was established in Alexandria in the mid-second century and attracted the greatest scholars and thinkers of the era who took part in establishing early doctrines and theology. Holy men such as Saint Anthony were inspired to pursue life as religious hermits in the vast Egyptian desert. Religious communities, the first monasteries, grew up around these "desert fathers," and visiting pilgrims carried the monastic order to other parts of the Christian world. Early Coptic Christians suffered intense persecution, especially during the reign of Diocletian (284–305 CE). The Coptic calendar, known as the "calendar of martyrs," dates from the beginning of Diocletian's reign. A theological dispute over the nature of Christ led to separation of the Coptic Church from mainstream Christianity, represented by Constantinople, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. The schism led to more persecution at the hands of Byzantine Christians and opened the door for an Arab invasion in 639–641 CE. After the Arab conquest, Coptic Christians were forced to pay special taxes, which led to periodic revolts. By the 12th century, Arabization and Islamization had taken over and Christians were a declining minority. Copts became important civil servants and businessmen and generally lived well within their community, although there were periods of persecution and discrimination. In more recent times, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism has brought new challenges to the Coptic community in Egypt.



**The marble pulpit from the Church of the Virgin Mary in Cairo dates from the 11th century, and demonstrates the joint influence of Christian and Muslim decorative arts. (John A. Shoup)**

## Sudan

As Christianity made its way up the Nile in the third and fourth centuries CE, early Coptic missionaries made contact with the Nubian kingdoms of Sudan. It was not until the sixth century, however, that the kingdoms adopted Christianity as a result of missionaries sent to the royal courts from Constantinople. Nubatia, south of Aswan, was the first to convert in 543 CE followed by Makouria, at the great bend of the Nile River, in 569 CE. Alwa, farther south along the Blue Nile, was converted in 580 CE. Once the courts adopted Christianity, conversion throughout the population was rapid. Ancient temples were converted into churches, churches were built in towns, and numerous monasteries lined the rim of the Nile valley. Arab invasions of Nubia in 651 and 652 CE were repelled, and Nubian independence was recognized. Coptic Christians fleeing persecution in Egypt emigrated to Nubia, and Christianity flourished over the next centuries. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the Mamluks of Egypt undertook campaigns into Nubian territory, opening up the region to Arab settlement. Gradual Arabization of Nubia followed, and by the 16th century Christianity had all but disappeared among Nubians. Coptic migrants from Egypt continued to move into Sudan into the 19th century. The community had an important place in business and commerce and was generally tolerated by Arab rulers. Persecution greatly increased under the Mahdist state in the late 19th century, which forced Christians to accept Islam or flee. The Coptic community in northern Sudan today is typically peaceful and nonpolitical, but it faces discrimination and harassment by the Islamic government.

## Ethiopia

The Coptic church in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, began about 330 CE with the conversion of the Aksumite King Ezana by a shipwrecked Syrian monk, Frumentius. Ordained by the patriarch of Alexandria, Frumentius became Ethiopia's first *abuna* (head of the Ethiopian church). For the next 1,500 years, the *abuna* was an Egyptian from Alexandria. Monastic tradition was introduced with the arrival in the fifth century of the Nine Saints, Syrian missionaries who established monasteries in the highland mountains, some only accessible by rope. After the fall of Aksum, Christianity continued to spread across the highlands, mostly through imperial military campaigns, and Coptic Christianity became ingrained in cultural, spiritual, and social life. Some of Coptic Christianity's greatest monuments are the 13th-century rock-hewn churches of Lalibala. Arab expansion isolated Ethiopia, and the church developed its own unique traits, including Judaic and African elements. The Ethiopian church recognizes the Saturday sabbath (later adding Sunday), dietary restrictions, and male circumcision. At the heart of the religion is the Ark of the Covenant, known as *Tabot*, which, according to legend, had been brought to Ethiopia centuries earlier by the son of the biblical King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. The original ark rests in the Church of Saint Mary Seyon in Aksum, whereas every church contains a replica that is used in special religious processions. During the processions, religious scribes and cantors known as *debtera*, who are uniquely Ethiopian, beat large drums to accompany the singing and rhythmic dancing of priests. *Debtera* are also associated with healing and magic. In the 16th century, the Ethiopian Empire was almost destroyed by Arab invasions. The empire, along with its Christian heritage, survived largely with Portuguese help. The Portuguese in turn pressed for conversion to Roman Catholicism but failed, and Jesuit missionaries were exiled. Through centuries of civil war, foreign conflict and occupation, and a Marxist government, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has bound the people of the highlands together and continues to be an integral part of national identity.

**See also:** [Alexandria](#); [Coptic Churches and Monasteries](#); [Coptic Museum](#).

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## COPTIC CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES

The Coptic church in Egypt is one of the oldest Christian churches in the world. Tradition states that the apostle Mark brought Christianity to Egypt and founded the church in Alexandria between 50 and 60 CE. Monasticism began in Egypt, as individuals sought a quiet life away from people and as groups sought a communal form of devotion. The first to seek individual seclusion was Saint Anthony (251–356), who retreated to Egypt's Eastern Desert. The first rules for cenobitic, communal monastic orders were set by Saint Pachomius (292–346), known as "The Great," who organized the first cloister monastery in Upper Egypt at Tabennisi north of Thebes in 323. The rules of how to live as a monk in a monastery were set by Pachomius and translated into Latin and served as an important source for Western European orders such as the Benedictines.

Two different types of monasteries developed early in Egypt: the anchorite (solitary from the Greek *anachôêsis*) and the cenobitic (communal from the Greek *koinis bios*), styles that also greatly influenced the monasteries each built. Both, however, grew from a movement among Coptic priests of *apotaktikoi*, or those who renounced aspects of life. These early ascetics were called *monachus*, the Greek word meaning living a life of solitude though not of withdrawal. The monk did not participate in aspects of normal life such as marriage but spent their time in prayer. The Coptic church chose to select its hierarchy from among the monks rather than the priests who did (and still do) live a normal life.

Anchorite monasteries tend to be located away from the center of Egyptian life: out in the desert rather than in the Nile valley. They sought places in the “wilderness,” taking as their example the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and New Testament ascetics such as John the Baptist who sought solitude in the *erêmos* (Greek for wilderness). The first of the monks to abandon the Nile valley, Saint Anthony, was, according to his hagiography, on his way to Upper Egypt when a voice told him to go into the desert instead and find a place at the foot of Mount Qulzum far from the mainstream of Egyptian life. Anchorite monasteries are small, with individual rooms or cells for some eight to 12 monks. Before the Arab and Muslim conquest of Egypt, most monasteries built walls to surround the entire complex. Entrances often use a basket and pulley system for added protection, with monks, visitors, and food hoisted up in the basket to an upper level. Being self-contained, anchorite monasteries had to have sufficient water supplies inside the walls not only for use by the monks but also to irrigate their gardens. The monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun were forced to fortify against attacks by Berbers from Libya in the fifth century who attacked them four times. They built walls around their compounds and a fortified tower called a *qasar* in Arabic.

In his long career as a monk, Saint Anthony established several monasteries both in the Nile valley and in the desert. In the Nile valley, he lived as a monk from 285 until 313 near Bani Suef at Mount Pispir, which is now modern Dayr al-Maymun. This he called his “outer mountain,” meaning that it was where he would contact the public. His place deep in the Eastern Desert was his “inner mountain” where he would contemplate life and God. During his lifetime, Saint Anthony frequently met his supporters at Mount Pispir and in 338 he helped the monk Amoun found monasteries in Wadi al-Natrun at Kellia. Known as Scetis in ancient texts, Wadi al-Natrun runs parallel to the Rosette or al-Rashid or Alexandria branch of the Nile in the delta. The first monastery built in Wadi al-Natrun was established by Saint Macarius around 330. Kellia was established by Saint Anthony and Saint Amoun to the south of that of Saint Macarius. Today, there are four monasteries in Wadi al-Natrun, but in the past many more were established in the valley. Most were abandoned in periods of persecution when various Muslim dynasties imposed taxes on the Coptic church and its institutions.

Today, the four important monasteries in Wadi al-Natrun are those of Saint Macarius or Abna Maqar, which was founded around 330; Saint Pshoi or Boshoi, which was founded in the late fourth century; the Monastery of the

Syrians, which was founded as a result of an early schism between Antioch and Alexandrian leadership in the sixth century; and the Monastery of Paromeos or al-Baramus founded by Saint Macarius in 355. The name comes from the phrase *Pa-Rameos*, which means “of the Romans” because of its connection with the saints Maximus and Domitius, children of Roman Emperor Valentinian I (ruled 364–375). In fact, one of its names is the Monastery of the Romans Maximus and Domitius. The monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun are called semi-anchorite because they have individual cells for monks to withdraw from their own community; for reasons of security, they are all enclosed by walls and share a communal church and eating hall used by all monks at least once a week. The monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun are also important as second homes for the Coptic pope or places where the popes lived prior to their election.

Among the monasteries found in the Nile valley belonging to the cenobitic tradition, the original founded by Saint Pachomius has disappeared, but the White Monastery or Monastery of Saint Shenute (Shanuda) founded sometime before 370 by Shenute’s uncle remains today. The monastery already existed when Shenute became a monk there in 370, and although Shenute did not found the monastery his fame was such that the place was later named for him. The monastery had a large community of more than 2,000 monks and nearly 2,000 nuns who were placed two per room (Gabra 2002, p. 95). When the nomadic Blemmyes (perhaps the Beja of the Eastern Desert) attacked Upper Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries, the monastery is said to have housed 20,000 men, women, and children who sought refuge inside its walls.

The monastery suffered destruction during the Persian occupation between 619 and 629, and the church was rebuilt with mud brick replacing the original stone masonry. Many Coptic churches combine mud brick and stone masonry, and several have support columns of mud brick. Churches are greatly influenced by Byzantine, Eastern, and Greek Orthodox traditions, but Coptic churches are also influenced by local traditions such as mud brick construction. Following Byzantine examples, churches all tend to be built on the basilica plan (Rodley 2001, p. 348). Originally, during the Roman Empire, a basilica was used for public administration, and the classic temple was too small to be adapted to Christian service. The basilica used Roman technology to span a large indoor area with arches supported by columns. This produced so-called sugarloaf vaulting, or long covered areas with open space between the columns that allowed the congregation to see what was happening at the front. Doors were placed at the west end of the building where originally an apse became the



narthex or vestibule, although most monastic churches in Egypt do not have one. The narthex is often decorated with a Christ Pantocrator or “All Victorious” inscription above the door leading into the church or in the dome above the sanctuary or altar. The inside of the church usually has three main covered halls and two rows of support columns. The walls and vaults are covered with frescos that depict stories from the Bible and pictures of saints. Among the most common are the *Deisis*, or the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist at the side of Christ; and the *Anastasis*, or Christ taking Adam and Eve to Heaven. Coptic churches and monasteries all allow the faithful to have full access to the relics of saints held in feretories (where the bodies of saints are buried), which are usually along the side walls or in reliquaries also along the walls. The faithful are encouraged to touch the relics and then kiss their fingers to obtain their blessings.



Inside the Mu‘allaqah or Hanging Church of the Virgin Mary, frescoes from the 14th century were found during restoration in 1984. (John A. Shoup)

At the front of the church is the pulpit called an *ambon*, and behind it is the screen that separates the holy of holies or sanctuary or altar from the area open to the common people. In most Coptic churches, a special entrance to the holy of holies is found called a *khurus* for use by the monks and priests. In the Eastern

churches, the sanctuary is where certain rites of the mass are conducted for monks and priests and not open to the public. Many of the protecting screens are made of intricately carved stone (often of marble) or wood (called *mashrabiyyah* in Arabic) and are decorated with icons of saints. The front of the church usually is raised and built in the eastern apse of the basilica. The domes that form the roof of the sanctuary are also richly decorated in frescos depicting Christ and saints. Seating is built for the monks and priests who are there to witness the most holy part of the mass, sometimes in tiers of stone or on mud brick benches.

Coptic artwork has always been of the highest quality. Although some monasteries in Egypt such as Saint Katherine in Sinai remain under the control of the Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church, Coptic art is as much Egyptian as it is part of the Orthodox traditions. Acanthus and basket capitals were originally made at rock quarries near Constantinople and then exported to Egypt. Egypt exported valuable purple porphyry used to make imperial tombs. The exchange ended with the Arab conquest and Coptic traditions began to pull more from Egyptian sources than from Byzantium. Bible accounts set in Egypt are of particular interest to the Copts such as the holy family's flight and stay in Egypt. Many places in Egypt connected to the holy family's flight to and life in Egypt are places of pilgrimage and sites of churches of interest to both Copts and Muslims. Cairo has several sites associated with the holy family such as the Virgin's Tree in Matariyyah visited by Muslim and Coptic women and the church that marks the house of the holy family in Ma'adi along the banks of the Nile.

The Coptic church has had periods in recent history when the numbers of the faithful dropped significantly and the numbers of young entering the priesthood or monasteries seemed to spell the death of the church. However, following Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War, a surge in religious belief began first among the Copts and then shortly by Muslims. Within a year after the war, the Church of Saint Mary in Zaytunah, Cairo, had massive numbers of Egyptians, Muslims, and Christians coming to see the apparition of the Virgin on the roof of the church. The sightings lasted for nearly two years and were photographed numerous times. In 2009, there was a similar sighting of the Virgin. Although the Egyptian Coptic hierarchy finds it difficult to deal with issues of the Coptic faithful abroad and growing Muslim intolerance in Egypt, the numbers of faithful are not threatened.

**See also:** [Coptic Christianity](#); [Coptic Museum](#); [History of Egypt: Ptolemaic and Roman Periods](#).

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## COPTIC MUSEUM

The Coptic Museum is located in what is called “Old Cairo” or *Misr al-Qadimah* as opposed to Islamic Cairo or the Fatamid city center. *Misr al-Qadimah* refers to the pre-Islamic area around the Roman-period fort called today *Qasr al-Shama'* (Fort of the Candle), the historic Babylon Fortress built in the first century CE and renovated by the Byzantines in the fourth to fifth centuries. The area has several important Christian and Jewish sites such as the Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, Church of St. Barbara, and the Synagogue of Ben Ezra located a short walking distance from the museum (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p.150).

The Coptic Museum was founded by Marcus Simaika Pasha in 1908 and houses the largest collection of Coptic art in the world. It was built next to the Mu'allaqah or Hanging Church (the Church of the Virgin Mary), which was built over two of Roman-period towers from the fourth century CE; the museum is within the walls of the Roman Babylon structure (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 158). Many of the icons and manuscripts from Egypt's Christian sites have been moved to the museum for safekeeping such as the Nag Hammadi manuscripts from Upper Egypt and icons from the Church of the Holy Virgin.

The museum contains many manuscripts from Egypt's Coptic churches and monasteries. The Nag Hammadi manuscripts date from the fourth and fifth centuries CE and are of major interest for the study of early Christianity. The texts are gnostic, an early form of Christianity that combined ancient Greek philosophic thought with the gospels. Gnosticism was popular in late antiquity and early Christianity in much of the eastern region of the Roman Empire, but its adherents were condemned as heretics. The discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts by two brothers in Upper Egypt in 1945 changed today's knowledge of early Christian thought. The story of how the manuscripts were found and made their

way finally to safety in the Coptic Museum reads like a mystery novel, but eventually all 13 surviving texts are in the museum (Hoeller n.d.). Several of the texts—no one knows exactly how many—were burned by the mother of the two brothers because she thought the manuscripts had a maleficent impact on her sons.

## Nag Hammadi Texts

Gnosticism comes from a Greek word meaning knowledge or salvation. Gnostic belief was rooted in both Christianity and Hellenistic philosophy. Much of what is known about gnostic belief comes from the Nag Hammadi texts. This collection was discovered in 1945 by farmer Muhammad al-Samman near the Upper Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi. Composed of 52 papyrus books, the library was hidden in a sealed jar. It is believed they were buried by monks from the nearby Pachomian monastery after the condemnation of gnostics by Saint Athanasius in 367. In 1946, Muhammad and his brother began to feud and eventually one of the books was sold to the Coptic Museum in Cairo. The brothers had wanted to slowly sell the manuscripts on the market and make more money, but their feud ended this plan. In the meantime, their mother burned some of the books because she felt they had brought bad luck. After the initial sales to the Coptic Museum, many of the other books found their way to a Cypriot antique dealer in Cairo. Several made their way to the west, but in 1952, following the Free Officer's Revolution, most of the books were given to the Coptic Museum by the revolutionary government. All of the books are written in Coptic and include the only complete version of the Gospel of Thomas. Today the entire Nag Hammadi books are housed in the Coptic Museum in Cairo.

An interesting feature of the Coptic Museum is its displays of stone statues that link the ancient Egyptian Mother Isis and her son Horus with Mary and Jesus. Another set of stone statues notes the adoption of Christ as the good shepherd from ancient Egyptian representations of the god protector. Other displays, such as those of textiles and woodwork, link late antiquity with Islamic patterns. The museum shows the Coptic Church as a living link between Egypt's ancient past and modern era.

**See also:** [Coptic Christianity](#); [Coptic Churches and Monasteries](#).

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# D

## DAMIETTA

Damietta, Damiyat, or Dumiyat is the capital of Dumiyat Province of Egypt. It is located nine miles (15 kilometers) from the mouth of the Dumiyat branch of the Nile River, the eastern branch in the delta. The city is 120 miles (200 kilometers) north of Cairo. Dumiyat has a long history and was an important port in ancient Egypt called *Tamiat* and *Tamiathis* by the Greeks. In its ancient period, the Dumiyat branch of the Nile was called the Bousirite branch and was the middle of three branches of the Nile. The Rosetta or Bolbitine was the western branch, the Canopic branch broke off from the Bolbitine, and the furthest eastern branch, the Pelousiac branch, now silted up, flowed to the city of Pelousion or Pelusium, today's Tall Faramah in northern Sinai. Pelusium was finally destroyed by the Latin King of Jerusalem, Baldwin I (ruled 1100–1118). He died returning from Egypt and has left his name in local mythology; the Arabic form of his name, Bardawil is the name of a shallow salt lake in north Sinai, Buhayrat Bardawil, marking where he died and was buried.

The city was famous in ancient times for the quality of its textiles, especially its embroidery. Garments made in Dumiyat were exported to royal courts, and Byzantine emperors and church officials wore heavily embroidered robes made in Dumiyat. The city was also famous for its wooden furniture that, like the textiles, was exported throughout the Mediterranean region.

The city fell to the Arabs under 'Amr ibn al-'As in 641, who had the oldest mosque in the city built called the *al-Fath* ("Conquest") *Mosque*. The Byzantines tried to retake the city three times, but the city's walls were built to prevent future raids after the city was sacked in 853. Further Byzantine raids were beaten off as was the siege of the city by Amalric I (ruled 1163–1174), the king of Jerusalem, who tried to take the city in 1169 from the Ayyubid *amir* Salah al-Din, then governor of Egypt for the last Fatamid ruler (ruled 1174–1193). The siege was unsuccessful, and Amalric was forced to return to



Palestine. The city remained prosperous and was a major port for goods coming north from Cairo. The city still produced excellent and sought-after textiles and wooden furniture as well as fine pastries, and it was an important fishing port.

The city was attacked by both the Fifth Crusade (1213–1221) and the Seventh Crusade (1248–1254). The city was taken after prolonged sieges, but the Crusader armies were defeated both times. The Fifth Crusade was beaten because the Crusade leaders did not understand the season of flooding in Egypt and they were ambushed at night and defeated. However, the Crusaders held the city for three years, from 1218–1220. In the Seventh Crusade, Dumiyat was taken again in 1249 after several years of siege, and the Crusader army was defeated at Manusrah in the delta in 1250. The king of France, Saint Louis IX, was captured and released only after a ransom was paid and the Crusaders evacuated Dumiyat.

In 1261, Mamluk Sultan Rukn al-Din Baybars (ruled 1260–1277) decided the town was too vulnerable to attack, and he not only destroyed but left it inhospitable to any future Crusader army. He blocked up the river so that ships could not pass, and the town moved a few kilometers to the south. Today, the site of old Dumiyat is once again inside the city. The heart of the old city of Dumiyat is the al-Fath Mosque, which has been rebuilt several times, including by the Fatamids (ruled 909–1171). Even though the city was in decline under the *Mamalik* (plural of *Mamluk*), it was still an important place as a stop for the pigeon mail service between Cairo and Damascus during their era. As a result, raising pigeons became an important part of local culture, and a pigeon market continues to this day near the al-Fath Mosque.

The town revived under the Ottomans, who wanted to expand trade. The town's arts had survived the period of Mamluk decline and once again supplied the Ottoman court with splendid embroidered robes of state. Textiles were also exported to European courts and the Vatican. The embroidery or *tiraz* has a long tradition and seems to have been first used by the Sassanids of Iran (ruled 224 BCE–651 CE) before being adopted by Byzantine and later Muslim dynasties. The robes made in Dumiyat were known for their skillful animal forms and calligraphy that is used now to help date a piece. Wooden furniture was once again exported to the Mediterranean. The Mamalik had built a few *madrasahs* or Islamic schools such as the mosque and madrasah of al-Madbuliyyah, but the Ottomans also built numerous houses, few of which remain today. The Ottoman revival of the city continued until the opening of the Suez Canal and the move of many businesses to Port Sa'id after 1869.

Today, Dumiyat is a busy port city of more than 1 million people. It remains famous for its wooden furniture and bakeries. In 1987, a new port was built, and it is now one of Egypt's main export sites for gas and oil with foreign investments from Italy and Canada in oil-and gas-processing plants. Dumiyat also has a vibrant fishing industry that operates on the Mediterranean as well as the nearby shallow salt lake, Manzalah, an important stop on the migration paths of many types of birds from Europe. This has helped locals develop a bird-watching tourism industry.

A few kilometers north is the suburb of R'as al-Barr, which has been developed into a beach resort with hotels and restaurants. Not as popular as the Alexandria beach, it nonetheless attracts both Egyptian and foreign tourists. R'as al-Barr is at the top of the narrow spit of land that separates Lake Manzalah from the Mediterranean.

A few kilometers from Dumiyat is the Monastery of Saint Damiana. It dates from the end of the Roman period but before the persecutions of Diocletian (ruled 284–305). The governor of the delta built a palace for his daughter and 40 virgins when she converted to Christianity. During the persecution of Christians by Diocletian (302–311), the governor and all of the girls were executed. Later, when Constantine (ruled 306–337) began to favor Christians after 324, his mother, Helena, had a tomb built for the governor's daughter, and subsequently a church was built in the sixth century. More buildings have been added recently to the site, and an important Christian holiday—*Mulid*—is held every May 20.

**See also:** [Coptic Churches and Monasteries](#); [Islam on the Nile](#); [Religious Holidays and Celebrations](#).

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## DENDARA

Dendara is a small town three miles (five kilometers) south of Qena on the west bank of the Nile River. Called *Iunet* or *Tantere* by the ancient Egyptians, the Greeks named it *Tentyris* (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 112). There is evidence that a temple dedicated to Hathor, the cow goddess, was located there as early as the Old Kingdom (3050–2160 BCE). The current temple is of Ptolemaic origin but has Roman-era additions. Hathor's temple in Dendara was connected to that of Horus at Edfu, and there is evidence that the men who built the pylons at Edfu also built them at Dendara (Bagnall and Rathbone 2008, p. 211). The temple was begun in 125 BCE and finished in 60 BCE and has many depictions of the last Cleopatra, Cleopatra VII, and her son Ceasarion, whom she claimed was the son of Julius Ceasar (Bagnall and Rathbone 2008, p. 211).

Hathor was among the oldest gods and goddesses of Egypt dating back into the Neolithic. The myth of the conflict between Osiris, Isis, Horus, and Seth was one of the most enduring, and later Hathor and Isis were fused. Horus was the son of Isis and Osiris, though in later telling of the story, Horus was also the husband of Hathor or Isis, and their son was Ihy, the god of music (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 298). A yearly marriage ceremony was held with the statue of Hathor being taken south to Edfu, an event that also celebrated the new year. The temple of Hathor, like that of Horus at Edfu, remains one of the best preserved because it was partially buried in a great drift of sand that was removed by Auguste Mariette; the colors are well preserved although fading since its uncovering. The famous zodiac of Dendara was first noticed by the scholars who came to Egypt with Napoleon, and it was successfully dated by Jean-François Champollion to the Ptolemaic period. Today, it is in the Louvre in Paris, having been removed in 1821 from its original location on the roof of the temple.



**The dwarf god Bes at the temple at Dendara. Bes became a favorite in later periods of antiquity as the protector of the household and childbirth. (John A. Shoup)**

In the fifth century CE, a Christian church was built inside the walls of the temple precinct, and many of the Hathor columns and depictions of the gods were defaced; although the faces were chiseled away, they remain recognizable (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 113; Wilkinson 2014, 167). Like many of the temples built by the Ptolemies, the temple has three birth houses (*mammisi*); one was originally built by Pharaoh Nektanabo II (ruled 360–342) and decorated by subsequent Ptolemaic rulers. A further birth house dates from the time of Nero (ruled 54–68 CE), although the decorations were finished after his death. The third birth house lies behind the main temple and was also a temple for the goddess Isis.



**The hypostyle hall of the Temple of Dendara features Hathor columns (columns topped with the face of the goddess Hathor) and depictions of late Ptolemy and Roman emperors. The hall was built by the Emperor Tiberius (12–37 CE). (John A. Shoup)**

In the Ptolemaic period, Dendara was a provincial capital. Like many other such towns, it was selected for its importance in controlling trade from the Red Sea ports and the Libyan desert. Dendara lost its importance to the growing influence of Qift, ancient Koptos, located farther south along the Nile, only 25 miles (40 kilometers) north of Luxor. Although there is a Christian church at Dendara, there is little information about the town in Christian or Islamic documents until the Ottoman period.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Egyptian Gods](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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## DINKA

The Dinka are a Nilotic people who speak a language that belongs to the Eastern Sudanic family of the Nilo-Saharan phylum. They are the single largest ethnic group in southern Sudan, numbering more than 3 million to 4 million or some 12 percent of the total of Sudan in the pre-independence period (Stokes 2009, p. 173). The Ngok branch of the Dinka number more than 2 million (Fadlalla 2009, p. 16). The Dinka live in the northern parts of the Republic of South Sudan from the Bahr al-Ghazal eastward into Ethiopia. The Ngok live in the contested Abyei region of Kordofan and have been greatly Islamized by contact with Arabs.

Like other Nilotic people, the Dinka are agro-pastoralists who move with their herds of cattle twice a year. During the dry period, they live in temporary camps and allow their cattle to graze in the Sudd's vast grasslands; in the wet period, they set up semipermanent settlements where they plant, raise, and harvest cereals such as millet. Once the millet is harvested, it is time again to move out onto the grasslands with their cattle.

Cattle are a vital part of their society, and men often take on the name of their favorite cow. Cattle are prized not only as symbols of status but also for the milk and dairy products they provide as food. Their dung is used for fuel, and their urine is used as a disinfectant, possibly protecting the Dinka from disease and death (Deng 1984, p. 2). Beef is not generally eaten unless an animal has already died. Parts from the dead animal are used for many different things: hides for bedding; horns for snuff boxes, spoons, and trumpets; hooves for bells; and so forth. Cattle are used in bride-wealth payments at marriage and can easily reach 200 head.

The Dinka have not developed any type of central leadership, but each community acts on its own authority. The only exception to this is the Ngok, who developed a hereditary paramount chief with lesser chiefs under him. The

Dinka are generally organized into lineages or tribes numbering some 25 clans or subtribes and speaking five dialects (Fadlalla 2009, p. 16).

Traditional Dinka religion, like those of all Nilotic peoples, has a creator god called *Nhialac*. He is assisted by a number of lesser spirits called *yath* or *jak* in singular and *yeeth* in plural. Many Dinka names are those of the yeeth; for example, Deng is the yath of storms and rain, Garang is the yath of the sun and the first man, Abuk is the yath of rivers and the first woman, and so forth (Stokes 2009, p. 176). Some Dinka have converted to Christianity or Islam, depending on historical contact. The Ngok were in more direct contact with Arabs from the north and thus have more Muslims among them. They also have many who are now Christians because they were products of British mission schools. According to Francis Deng, the greatest appeal Christianity held for the Dinka was the music at the mass or service (Deng 1984, p. 158).

Due to the Christian mission schools, many Dinka became educated and, among the Ngok, also maintained relations with their Arab neighbors. When Sudan became independent, the Dinka wanted a greater say in government policies and civil war broke out. The Dinka led much of the civil war against the central government of Sudan; in 1983 and the start of the second civil war in Sudan, John Garang de Mabior quickly emerged as the Dinkan leader. Unlike others in the leadership, John Garang maintained a unionist policy. He lost the support of some high-ranking members of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM), and he insisted that the organization's name not include "Southern" but be left to include all peoples of Sudan, north and south.

John Garang negotiated an end to the second civil war in 2004, but he died in a helicopter crash in 2005. In 2011, the southern provinces voted for total independence, and Dinka leader Salva Kiir Mayardit became the first president. Shortly after full independence, in a probe into official corruption, he dismissed his entire cabinet, including his vice president, Riek Machar, a Nuer. Conflict between the two men led to another civil war that quickly became a Dinka–Nuer conflict.

**See also:** [Bahr al-Ghazal River](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Nuer](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## DISUQ

Disuq or Desouk is a city in the Nile delta located fifty 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Alexandria in the province of Kafr al-Shaykh. It lies on the eastern bank of the Rosetta branch of the Nile. Its population today is nearly 150,000. It is home to one of the four largest Sufi (mystical forms of Islam) brotherhoods in Egypt. One group, the *Burhamiyyah* or *Disuqiyyah*, was named in honor of its founder, Sidi Ibrahim al-Disuqi, who lived at the end of the Ayyubid period (1171–1250) and beginning of the Mamluk period (1250–1517). He was the rector of al-Azhar or Shaykh al-Islam during the rule of Sultan Rukn al-Din Baybars (ruled 1260–1277). Baybars had a *zawiyah* built for him in Disuq, where he taught and was buried. In the 19th century, the mosque was expanded because it is the site of *Mulid*, a major pilgrimage and celebration. *Mulid* is celebrated in conjunction with those of Sidi Ahmad al-Badawi of Tanta. The two men were near contemporaries (Ahmad al-Badawi was the older of the two men and died in 1260; Ibrahim al-Disuqi was born in 1255 and died in 1296), and both were honored by the Egyptian leadership of their time, Ayyubid and Mamluk.

Like many other cities in the Nile delta, Disuq was a center for cotton production, which was introduced by Muhammad ‘Ali toward the start of the 19th century. The city is surrounded by a lush landscape of farmlands that produce a wide variety of crops, including broad beans, tomatoes, and cotton. In the 19th century, Muhammad ‘Ali expanded the canal system and allowed more land to come under cultivation.

Disuq is not built on a pre-Islamic site, but there are ruins of ancient cities nearby. To the south and up the Rosetta branch of the Nile lies *Sais* or *Zau*, which is about 31 miles (50 kilometers) from Disuq. Sais was the capital of Egypt under the last pharaohs of the late period (663–525 BCE). The Saite Dynasty, or 26th Dynasty tried to emphasize the glorious “golden era” of the past and restored many of the monuments in the country. The site of the capital, now



called *Sa al-Haja*, lies mostly in ruins. Little remains above ground other than parts of the temple of Neith, the goddess of warfare and weaving. Her cult center was at Sais.

**See also:** [Muhammad 'Ali](#); [Sufism and Sufi Brotherhoods](#); [Tanta](#).

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# E

## EDFU

The modern town of Edfu has a population of around 133,000 people and is located in the province of Aswan. It lies on the west bank of the Nile approximately halfway between Luxor and Aswan. In the ancient period, it was called *Djeba* or *Behdet* and *Apollonopolis Magna* by the Greeks (Bagnall and Rathbone 2008, p. 227). The town was an important trade center for goods coming north from Nubia, west from the Red Sea port of Berenike, and east from the Libyan Desert (from Kharga Oasis). The Ptolemies built a garrison there to protect the trade from the Blemmyes (perhaps the modern Beja).

The modern town crowds around the great Temple of Horus, but the ancient town site lies a short distance away toward the desert. Originally, the temple was buried under blown desert sands until 1860 when Auguste Mariette first uncovered it (Wilkinson 2014, 69). In fact, some of the village homes were built on the temple's roof. The site was excavated in the early 20th century by the French (1914–1933) and the Poles (1934–1939) (Bagnall and Rathbone 227). Today the temple site is under the care of a team of German archeologists who, with their Egyptian colleagues, continue to work. To the south lie three pyramids built by Pharaoh Huni of the third dynasty (ruled 2624–2597 BCE). These have had little archeological work to date, and so far their purpose remains a mystery. The Temple of Horus is one of the most complete in the country. The construction of the temple was begun by Ptolemy III Euergetes (ruled 246–222 BCE) in 237 BCE and was finished following a major revolt between 206 BCE and 186 BCE. The Theban Revolt was the bloodiest of the rural revolts against Ptolemaic rule and is actually on the walls of the Edfu temple possibly because Edfu was one of the centers of disturbances; in 207 BCE, the rebels seized the temple itself. The temple was completed by Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (ruled 80–58 BCE) in 57 BCE (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 460). The architectural completeness of the temple has helped archeologists interpret the aspects of

Egyptian religion that had not been fully understood, and the complete description in wall texts has filled in other details. The temple included a nilometer and a birth house (*mammisi*), which is associated with the goddess Hathor. The temple of Horus at Edfu had strong connections to the temple of Hathor at Dendara, and the statue of Hathor was brought to visit the temple of Horus once a year. In the Christian period, zealous monks and people hacked out the faces of the gods in such scenes as the myth of Horus and his battle with the god Seth.

For years the people of modern Edfu depended on tourism, but following the Arab Spring of 2011, tourism greatly dropped and left them with few alternatives. Those who have farms in the rural regions or who fish the Nile have some support, but there is little for taxi and horse carriage drivers. These drivers quickly organized themselves into a militant union that demanded that all who come to Edfu use their service, but this has proven counterproductive. Taxis are left out, and those few tourists who choose not to take horse-drawn carriages are subject to abuse by even local bystanders. This may change with the revival of tourism but demonstrates the need for strong government regulations.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Dendara](#); [Egyptian Gods](#); [Egyptology](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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## EGYPTIAN GODS

Ancient Egypt had a confusing number of gods, with more than 1,500 total. Each nome or province had its own gods, and on occasion certain nome gods became national. For the Greeks and Romans with their strikingly human-looking gods, the gods of Egypt were exotic, an expression of Egypt's "otherness" and its difference from the "logic" of Western systems of understanding.

Egypt's gods emerged in the Neolithic and were associated with the pastoralist Saharan peoples who moved to the Nile as the desert expanded. The power of the river was embodied as a god as were the destructive forces living along the Nile such as the hippopotamus (Taweret, Shepet) and crocodile (Sobek). Cattle (Hathor, Apis) and sheep (Khnum, Amun-Ra) were seen as beneficial life-giving forces, and therefore the gods associated with them were also kind and beneficial. The sun was also an important source of power. Egyptians developed a complex theology that changed over time, with certain gods gaining greater importance in certain periods. It has been argued by some scholars that, despite the vast number of gods, Egyptian religion tended toward monotheism. Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (1352–1336 BCE) attempted to make the sun god Aten the only god for the nation, but his efforts were resisted by the priest of Amun, another sun god. The sun deities often served as the inspiration for monotheism, with the gods Amun-Ra and Ra-Horakhty, or Ra-Atum, combining versions of the powers of the sun and emerging as supreme.

Egyptian religion has been described as an "add-on" religion with none of the old discarded and all of the new embraced. For this reason, several different creation stories were associated with nomes (provinces) or periods of Egyptian history when one city or another was the capital. For example, the Memphite creator was the god Ptah, who brought things to life by naming them. For Thebes, the creator was Amun, whereas there were four pairs of gods for Hermopolis: Nun and Naunet, Amun and Amaunet, Heh and Hauhet, and Kek

and Kauket. These gods brought forth the primeval mound of creation. For the city of Heliopolis, Atum gave life to Shu (air) and Tefnut (moisture), who gave birth to Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), who, in turn, gave birth to Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. Horus was the hawk-headed son of Osiris and was the very being of the pharaoh's divinity. From the Old Kingdom period (3000–2680 BCE), the pharaoh's royal name was called his Horus name.

Egyptian gods were frequently grouped together (from two to 12) in important associations. Among the best known by people today is the triad of Osiris, Isis, and Horus; a father, mother, and son who seemed to merge in late antiquity with God the father, Mary the mother, and Jesus the son. Other triads included the one of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu (from Thebes) and Amun, Ra (or Re), and Ptah (from Memphis). The tetrads (or groups of four) included those that noted the four directions and peoples of the known world: Egyptians, Libyans, Nubians, and Middle Easterners. Another group of four gods was made up of the sons of Horus, who guarded the canopic jars after mummification. Some gods, such as Hathor, had different manifestations—seven in her case. The Ogdoad, or the eight gods of chaos of pre-creation, were Amun, and Amaunet, Nu and Naunet, Heh and Hauhet, and Kuk and Kauket. The Ennead, or nine gods, were Atum and the eight he produced at creation: Shu, Tefnut, their children Geb and Nut, and their children Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. While this seems to be already highly complicated, each god had a role well understood by the ancient Egyptians who found their pantheon logical. Among the most important of the gods were those who stood out from the rest due to their long-term popularity or divine powers. Several of the most important of the gods are presented here.

**Amun**, the father of the gods, was originally the chief god of Thebes. During the Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BCE), Amun moved to the position as head of all Egyptian gods, and the temple at Karnak was built for him. Amun was associated with other “chief gods” and over time became Amun-Ra, in combination with Ptah and Ra, and was seen as the force of regeneration. His consort was the goddess Amaunet, the mother of Ra. Amun had another wife, Mut, who soon overshadowed Amaunet. Mut emerged in the New Kingdom as the mother, wife, and daughter of Amun and was the mother of the moon god Khonsu. Amun was depicted in human form with two tall feathers on the top of his crown or a man with a ram's head with curling horns surmounted by a solar disk. The god **Atum** is another creator and chief god originally from Heliopolis. He was represented as a man in full form wearing the double crown (like the

pharaoh) and was increasingly associated with Ra, the god of the sunset and the power of regeneration. Atum was also represented as a snake when worshipped as the primeval power. He was associated with the *Benben* stone, the top stone of a pyramid, that emerged when the first floods receded; the stone marked the mound of creation. Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (1352–1336 BCE) attempted to institute worship of the sun god **Aten** in place of Amun and even changed his name to Akhenaten to emphasize the supremacy of Aten over Amun and the other gods. He also moved the capital from Thebes to a new city, Akhetaten, today's Tall al-'Amarnah, also named for Aten. When Akhenaten died, the old religion reasserted itself with the boy king, Tutankhamun (1336–1327 BCE), who took Amun back into his royal name. By the last pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, the general Horemheb (1323–1295 BCE), the Aten heresy had been destroyed and the return to traditional religion was complete.

**Anubis**, the guardian of the dead, was the god who took care of the body as it was embalmed. He was also the protector of the cemeteries and assisted Osiris with the rites where the soul was judged and given the ability to speak again, the “opening of the mouth” ceremony. Anubis was represented as a jackal or as a man with a jackal head. Anubis was the son of the goddess Nephthys and Osiris, even though her husband was Seth. Anubis is known in modern popular culture through the films and TV series *Stargate* as well as through other such popular culture representations as fierce warriors.

**Apis**, the bull, was the physical presence of the creator god Ptah of Memphis. Apis was the physical power of the ruling pharaoh, who wore a bull's tail as part of the royal costume. Among the oldest of representations of the pharaoh he is shown as a bull trampling his enemies, the palette in the Louvre dated from 3500 to 3100 BCE (Sturdwick 2006, p. 212). One of the most important festivals in ancient Egypt, the *Heb Sed* or royal jubilee, was held on the 30th year of the pharaoh's rule and reestablished his power. Among the things he had to do was to run with a specially chosen bull of particular color and marking that represented Apis. When the Apis bull died, it was mummified and buried in a special chamber just north of Saqqarah. The cow that gave birth to the selected bull was considered the earthly representation of the goddess Isis and called an *iseum*. It was also mummified and buried in the same chambers. In the Ptolemaic period, Apis was combined with Zeus, Hades, and Dionysos and was called *Serapis*. It is from his Greek name, Serapis, that the special burial place is called the Serapeum.

**Bastet** or **Bes** was the patroness of the pharaoh. Bastet was equated with the

more terrible and ferocious lion-headed Sekhmet, the goddess of destruction, although Bastet was the more gentle representation of protection and nurturing. She was the daughter of Atum, the creator, and was associated with Hathor, Mut, and Tefnut, all goddesses of love and protection. Bastet grew in popularity in late antiquity, and domestic cats were mummified in large numbers to honor her. Bastet was represented by a cat or a cat-headed woman, and her names carries on today in modern Egyptian Arabic with the word *bis*, which means a domestic cat. In modern popular culture, Bastet was revived as the origin of the cat woman character in the *Batman*-inspired *Cat Woman* film.

**Khnum** is one of the oldest gods of ancient Egypt and dates back to the Neolithic period. He is seen in many pieces of rock art and has been identified by archeologists such as Malika Hachid as either representations of Amon-Ra or Khnum, both of whom are depicted with ram heads (Hachid 2001, p. 35). Khnum made man out of clay on a potter's wheel. Khnum's main center of worship was at Aswan on Elephantine Island and at Esna. Khnum was seen even as the creator of the other gods, plants, animals, and all living forces and was also believed to be responsible for the fertility of the Nile floods. Khnum was depicted as a ram-headed man or as a ram with the either curled or straight horns. Khnum was assisted in the creation of life by the frog midwife goddess, Heket, who blew her breath into the form. Khnum then placed the unborn child as a seed in the mother's womb.

**Hathor**, goddess of love and joy, was another of the most ancient gods of Egypt. She was depicted as a cow or as a woman with large bovine eyes and cow's ears and wearing a crown of horns with a sun disk. Representations of cattle in religious art go back to at least the predynastic period (5500 BCE) and even earlier in Neolithic rock art (Strudwick 2006, p. 130) A statue of a woman with raised arms in the shape of cattle horns from the Naqada II period (3500–3100 BCE) is thought to be among the earliest of anthropomorphic representations of an Egyptian cow goddess (Wilkinson 2000, p. 15). A cow goddess is clearly seen on the Narmer palette dated 3100 BCE (Oakes and Gahlin 2003, p.168), though there is some doubt whether she was called Hathor. Hathor was the mother goddess providing life-giving milk to humankind and was the divine mother of the pharaoh. She was the daughter and eyes of Ra but also had a destructive side. In her destructive role, she was combined with the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet (Strudwick 2006, p. 130). Her major place of worship was Dendara, which continued to be used and expanded well into the Roman era.



**Isis, Osiris, and Horus** are perhaps the best known of Egyptian gods and became major gods of the Roman Empire. In the later Roman era, Isis was represented as a seated mother nursing Horus and closely associated with the Christian image of Mary with the infant Jesus (Strudwick 2006, p. 122). Isis and Osiris were brother and sister, children of Geb (Earth) and Nut (the sky). Isis was the symbol of motherhood who used magic to locate, reassemble, and revive Osiris with the help of Anubis when their brother, Seth, the god of chaos, killed Osiris and scattered his parts to different places in the world. His temple at Abydos was believed to have been the place where his head was buried. Isis and her sister, Nephthys, mourned the death of Osiris and assisted and supported each other in the search for his body. Osiris was the king of the underworld, the god of the afterlife, and the judge of the soul. He was represented as a mummified man. Through her magic, Isis was able to reactivate Osiris's penis and became pregnant by him with their child, Horus. Horus was the falcon-headed god of the sky and the representation of the divine kingship of the pharaoh. Horus avenged the death of Osiris and challenged Seth to several contests that lasted for 80 years before Geb decided in favor of Horus. These contests are depicted on the walls of the temple at Edfu. Seth was deposed from the usurped throne and castrated, and Horus ascended as the representation of the living pharaoh while his father in the afterlife represented the pharaoh's death and rebirth. During the contests, Seth had been able to take out Horus's left eye, but the goddess Hathor restored it to him. The left eye or *wedjat* became a symbol of the protection of Horus over the pharaoh and the dead on their way to meet Osiris.

**Ptah** was god of Memphis and the creator god of the Old Kingdom (3100–2686 BCE) and one of the oldest gods of Egypt. He was married to Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess of destruction, or to Mut, the mother goddess. Their son, Nefertum, completed the Memphis triad. Ptah was associated with sculpture and metalworking early in the Old Kingdom. In the Ptolemaic period, he was associated with the Greco-Roman gods Hephaistos and Vulcan. Ptah was the creator in the Memphis mythology and was later also associated with death and the Memphite god of death, Sokar. As Ptah, Sokar, or Osiris, Ptah was represented as a mummified man with his hands out front holding a scepter of the *djed* (backbone) of Osiris surmounted with an *ankh*, the ancient Egyptian symbol of life. He is usually shown wearing a tight-fitting skullcap often in blue.

**Ra or Re** was the god of the regenerative forces of nature. He was associated with the sun and because of this had different representations. As the god of the

morning sun, he was represented as Khepri, the scarab (dung beetle), which rolled the sun across the sky like the scarab rolls a ball of dung. Khepri was a creator god who represented the solar journey and rebirth, seen by Egyptians as the sun's daily death and rebirth. During daylight hours, he was the falcon-headed Ra-Horakhty, and in the evening he was the human-looking Atum who represented the regenerative powers. He was also depicted as the ram-headed Amun-Ra or Amun-Re who blessed the souls of the dead. His main center of worship was at Heliopolis.

**Sekhmet** was a daughter of Ra, the sun god, and represented the destructive nature of the sun's power. Ra asked Sekhmet to punish humankind, but she developed a taste for blood and nearly destroyed humanity until the gods devised a trick. They gave her a vast quantity of red-colored beer that stopped her killing. When she awoke from the trick, she was angry and left Egypt. Without her, the sun's power was diminished, and Thoth, god of wisdom, was sent to bring her back. Sekhmet was depicted as a lioness or a lion-headed woman with a sun disk on her head. The power of Sekhmet was such that at the New Year's celebrations, Egyptians exchanged amulets of Sekhmet and Bastet to provide protection in the following year. Sekhmet was also considered a goddess who protected against illness. In recent years, a statue of her placed in Luxor was vandalized by locals out of fear it would harm their children (Wilkinson 2000, 182).

**Seth**, brother of Osiris, was the personification of wild, uncivilized nature. Like his brother, Osiris, and his sisters, Isis and Nephthys, he was a son of Geb and Nut. Seth was the god of chaos. He was jealous of Osiris and killed him, throwing his severed parts to different places in the world. Seth was paired with Nephthys, but she had sex with Osiris and gave birth to Anubis as a result. Seth was not always a despised figure for Egyptians and as early as the Second Dynasty (2890–2686 BCE), Seth replaced Horus on the *serekh* of the king's royal name. The Hyksos also adopted Seth as their most important god, associating him with the Syrian god Ba'al. Even several New Kingdom monarchs took royal names that emphasized the strength of Seth as the god who accompanied Ra on his journey across the sky. Even so, Seth was seen as a monster whose castration by Horus rendered him impotent. Seth was represented as a man with a jackal-like head with a long nose and square ears.



The goddess Sekhmet in the temple of Mut at Karnak, just north of Luxor. Sekhmet was the goddess of healing and power, and was a daughter of Ra, the sun god. (John A. Shoup)

**Thoth** was a god of the moon and god of wisdom. He was depicted as a man with an ibis head or as a baboon. In the New Kingdom period (1550–1070 BCE), Thoth was depicted as an ibis-headed man surmounted by a crescent moon and a sun disk. Thoth was among the ancient gods with representations of him dating back to the Thinite period (first dynasty 3100–2890 BCE). Thoth was considered a creator god and the inventor of writing. For this reason, he was often shown with a scribe's inkwell and pen and was the patron of scribes. Thoth recorded the reigns of the pharaohs. He was a companion of Ra as the sun crossed the sky and assisted Horus in his contests with Seth. Thoth was said to have sprung from Seth's head as a result of eating lettuce that had Horus's semen on it. Thus, Thoth was both the son of Seth and of Horus. The worship of Thoth seems to

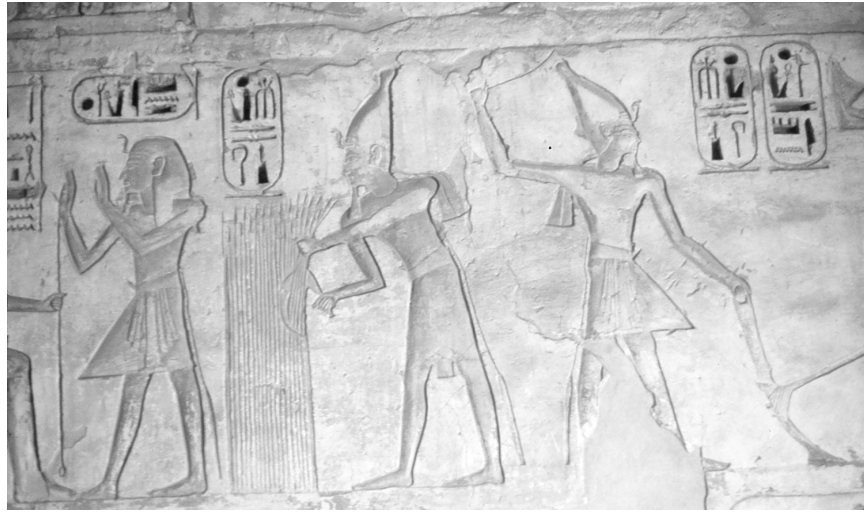
have been mainly in the town of Khemnu, which the Greeks called Hermopolis and is now modern-day al-Ashmunayn.



The Egyptian god Thoth was sometimes represented as a baboon—as in this statue in the Karnak Temple near Luxor. (John A. Shoup)

In addition, the pharaoh was protected by the vulture **Nekhbet** and the cobra **Wadjet**. Their symbols were on the pharaoh's crown, and the Wadjet was also placed on mummies. The Nile's flood became the god **Hapy**, who was represented in art with folds of fat on his stomach and pendulous breasts to indicate the fertility of the soil. Hapy was often depicted in twos with the plants symbolic of Upper and Lower Egypt tied together in the *sema* or unity knot. Egyptians also liked the dwarf god **Bes**, who was associated with music and drove evil forces away. He was often worn as a charm and shown with his teeth

and his tongue stuck out.



**This scene from Madinat al-Habu shows Pharaoh Ramesses III before the god Hapy (the god of the Nile—seated to the left of the picture). Ramesses is plowing the fields of *Iaru* (reeds) and harvesting the wheat. This was part of the Pharaoh's obligation to placate the gods Hapy and Min, and ensure the fertility of the soil. (John A. Shoup)**

**See also:** [Abydos](#); [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Dendara](#); [Edfu](#); [Luxor](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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## EGYPTOLOGY

Egyptology, or the study of ancient Egypt, grew out of European interest in ancient Egyptian artifacts and the attempt to better understand early Christianity. European interest in all things Egyptian was reborn with the Renaissance. In 1499, the tomb of Francesco Colonna in Venice was decorated with an elephant with an obelisk with hieroglyphics that had been copied from a Roman temple frieze (Baines and Malek 1990, p. 22). Interest in the ancient Egyptian language grew in the Enlightenment with many ancient and Coptic papyri brought back to Europe. As early as the 1620s, Europeans tried to “read” or interpret hieroglyphics (Baines and Malek 1990, p. 22).

In 1798, Napoleon invaded Egypt in an attempt to cut off Britain from its colonies in India. Unlike other conquerors, Napoleon brought with him a large number of scientists, surveyors, and architects, among others, who were to study the country. In 1799, Horatio Nelson’s fleet caught the French fleet at anchor off Abukir Bay, stranding Napoleon and his army in Egypt. With nothing else to do and no hope of immediate rescue, Napoleon’s scientists set about studying the country, both ancient and modern. The result was the 20-volume *Description de l’Égypte* published between 1809 and 1828. The French made many important discoveries, but none was as important as the trilingual Rosetta Stone found in 1799 near the town of Rosetta or Rashid in the delta. The stone was deciphered by French linguist Jean-François Champollion in 1820 (starting date). The Greek text was readable, and using it allowed both the Egyptian hieroglyphics and their cursive form to be deciphered. It took Champollion and an English colleague, Thomas Young, 20 years to be able to read the inscription, but it opened up the study of ancient Egypt and made it possible to read what the ancients had left.

Giovanni Belzoni played a major role in pillaging ancient sites to find artifacts for the European market. Belzoni arrived in Egypt in 1814 trying to sell a machine to raise water, but Muhammad 'Ali was not interested. Belzoni had the fortune to meet Swiss explorer Jean-Louis Burckhardt, who introduced him to the British consul, Henry Salt, who wanted to compete with the French consul for Egyptian antiquities. With the approval of Muhammad 'Ali, Salt and Belzoni pillaged sites for items to send to London. Nonetheless, Belzoni was a talented man, and he produced highly detailed paintings of Seti's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. While at Luxor, Belzoni excavated at the temple of Karnak and found and took statues of the goddess Sekhmet and one of Seti II, all of which are now in the British Museum.

In the 1820s, real Egyptologists trained in archeology arrived in Egypt to begin the scientific study of ancient sites. British archeologist John Gardner Wilkinson arrived in 1821 and worked on sites as far south as Nubia. His contributions to Egyptology are many, including a detailed map of Tall al-'Amarna, the capital of Akhenaten (1352–1336 BCE), while his work on ancient Egyptian inscriptions are among his most important contributions. In 1842, Carl Richard Lepsius, working for Prussian Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm IV, arrived with an expedition to survey sites in the country. In 1865, Lepsius discovered the Canopus Decree, which proved valuable for its comparison with the Rosetta Stone.

In 1850, French scholar August Mareitte came to Egypt, and he would go on to play a major role in founding the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. He also excavated the Serapeum at Saqqarah. Although Mareitte played a major role in unearthing early knowledge about ancient Egypt, his excavation methods were crude and included using dynamite. The first modern archeologist to excavate in Egypt was British scientist Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie. Flinders Petrie pioneered modern methods of excavation and began his work at the pyramids on the Giza plateau. Petrie worked at several sites in the country, including predynastic Naqada, Tanis, Tall 'al-Amarna, and the Fayyum pyramids. In 1899, he gained the permit to excavate Abydos in Upper Egypt. Petrie invented "sequence dating" in which he worked out a chronological dating by comparing the finds from several sites and establishing a time sequence. He assumed that the simpler artifacts were generally older in time and more complex ones more recent, and with this understanding he established the sequence of Naqada I (4,000–3,500 BCE) and Naqada II (3,500–3,100 BCE).

Petrie treated his workers well and paid them bonuses for each artifact they

found to prevent them from taking them to the antique dealers who were allowed to sell them at the time. Petrie is called the “father of Modern Egyptology” and he worked tirelessly with his wife, who accompanied him on his excavations, for better methods and preservation of finds. During his excavations of the tomb of King Djer (3000 BCE) he found no body but did find an arm with three magnificent bracelets of gold, lapis lazuli, amethyst, and turquoise. He gave the arm to the chief inspector of antiquities of Lower Egypt, who subsequently gave the arm to the assistant conservator at the Cairo Museum. The assistant kept the three bracelets but threw the arm and its bandages away, thus destroying the earliest evidence of embalming (Oakes and Gahlin 2009, p. 41). Petrie is reported to have commented, “A museum is a dangerous place” (Oakes and Gahlin 2009, p. 41).

Today, Egyptology is a well-established discipline taught in universities worldwide. In Egypt and Sudan, national universities have degree programs that teach students with hands-on access to artifacts in museums and in the field excavating sites. Egyptology departments exist in North America and in Europe where students have less access to field sites unless their professors lead excavations in Egypt. Frequently, universities connected to major museums offer Egyptology courses, and students can use items in the museums for their studies.

**See also:** [Abu Simbel](#); [Dendara](#); [Edfu](#); [Luxor](#); [Museum of Egyptian Antiquities: The Egyptian Museum, Cairo](#).

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## EMIN PASHA (EDUARD SCHNITZER) (1840–1892)

Mehmed Emin Pasha was born to a Jewish family in Germany as Isaak Eduard Schnitzer and was baptized as Eduard Carl Oscar Theodore Schnitzer. In 1864, he finished training as a doctor and headed for the Ottoman Empire after being disqualified from practice in Germany. On the way to Istanbul, he found employment in Montenegro and was soon fluent in Turkish, Albanian, and Greek. In 1870, he entered the service of Isma‘il Haqqi Pasha, governor of northern Albania. During this time, he traveled through most of the Ottoman Empire.

When Haqqi Pasha died in 1873, Emin Pasha went back to his hometown in Germany and brought Haqqi Pasha’s wife and children with him, passing them off as his own family. He abandoned them in 1875 and was soon in Cairo. He then headed for Khartoum and changed his name to Muhammad al-Amin, Mehmed Emin in Turkish. General Charles Gordon asked Emin to join his service in Sudan in 1876. Within a year Gordon sent Emin Pasha south to the Equatoria Province on a diplomatic mission to Buganda and Bunyoro, where his fluency in the Luganda language made him popular with the kings of both states.

In 1878, the Khadawi of Egypt approved Emin Pasha’s appointment as the governor of the most southern province of Sudan and allowed him to be granted the title of *bey*. With a small force of only a few thousand soldiers, he was able to keep the peace and prevent slavery until 1881 when the Mahdi’s victories cut off the south. In 1883, forces of the Mahdi moved south to capture both the province and Emin Pasha. Pasha withdrew his forces south to Lake Albert; although communications with the north were cut, he was able to communicate with Zanzibar.

In 1886, following the death of General Gordon, the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition was organized by Henry Morton Stanley. The European powers of France, Belgium, and Britain came together to rescue Emin Pasha from the Mahdi, and in that year Stanley left Britain to Congo. It had been decided that he make his way up the Congo rather than from Zanzibar, and Stanley divided his column into two; a fast advanced column that would arrive first to rescue Emin and his men and a slower rear column that would arrive later with the provisions.

Stanley and the advance column made slow progress through the Ituri Forest and met Emin Pasha in 1888. The officers in charge of the rear column proved to be incompetent and cruel, but some trekked on to meet up with Stanley and Emin Pasha.

Stanley and Emin fell out in a bitter quarrel because Pasha refused to leave his post and, although his men were rebellious, he did not feel it warranted his return to Europe. Eventually, Stanley had his way and Emin Pasha and several thousand of his men and their families left to go to Zanzibar in 1889, though many of his troops remained in Uganda until 1890. On the way to Zanzibar, they were able to verify the existence of the Ruwenzori Mountains and that their waters flowed into the Nile. In 1890, Stanley and Pasha arrived at Bagamoyo, where they were met by Germans. Emin was overjoyed to meet with the Germans, but at a dinner held for him and Stanley he became drunk and fell off a balcony and cracked his skull. He was left at the hospital in Bagamoyo, and Stanley proceeded back to England where he was hailed as the savior of Emin Pasha.

Emin Pasha took service with the German East Africa Company. A lifelong passion for collecting specimens of plants and animals continued, as did his notes on the peoples and customs of Africa. His scientific contributions were recognized in 1890 with an award by the Royal Geographical Society. He was killed in what is today the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1892.

**See also:** [Buganda](#); [Bunyoro](#); [Gordon, Charles George](#); [Lake Albert](#); [Stanley, Henry Morton](#).

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## ETHIOPIA (ABYSSINIA)

Located in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is an important Upper Nile state. The core of the country is the high Ethiopian plateau, a mountainous region carved by steep gorges. The Blue Nile and the Atbara Rivers, the main Nile tributaries, originate in these highlands. Monsoonal rains from the Indian Ocean drench the highlands each summer, sending torrents of water and mud down the river gorges. This annual flood brought life-giving water and rich soil to ancient Egypt and is just as important today. For Ethiopia, the deep river canyons have been barriers, and the remoteness of the high plateau has given Ethiopia a unique history. Ethiopia is renowned as the oldest Christian country in Africa, with a monarchy said to have lasted 3,000 years, and it is the only African country to remain independent in the age of European colonization.

Ethiopia is divided into many ethnic regions. The highlands are dominated by the Amhara and Tigray people, who are Orthodox Christians and rivals for power. Important Amhara regions include Gojjam in the western highlands, surrounded by the Blue Nile; Begemder in the northwest, known for the old capital of Gonder; and Shewa (Shoa) to the southeast with the modern capital of Addis Ababa. The Amhara provided most of Ethiopia's emperors and have a strong influence on the country's history and culture. The province of Tigray lies to the northeast along the border with Eritrea and is the site of the ancient city of Aksum (or Axum). Among other important ethnic groups are the Oromo (Galla), who migrated into the highlands in the 16th century, and the Falasha, a Jewish people of ancient origins living near Lake Tana. The lowlands surrounding the plateau have been subject to invasion, and most regions are Arab and Muslim in character, although the southwestern lowlands are historically African and pagan and were subjected to slave raids in the past. Throughout much of history, the lowlands acted as a moat around the plateau, isolating the highlands.

### Early History

Ethiopia has been called the "cradle of humanity." Remains of the earliest

known hominids (humanlike species), some more than 5 million years old, have been uncovered in eastern Ethiopia, suggesting that this may be where early humans first originated. Early inhabitants of the highlands were hunter-gatherers who are depicted in Stone Age rock paintings from 10,000 BCE. Later paintings picture domestic activities as the population turned to herding, which was introduced from the Nile valley about 2000 BCE (Henze 2000, p. 13). Ethiopia was known to ancient Egypt and may have been part of the Land of Punt from which Egyptian trading expeditions acquired myrrh, ivory, gold, exotic animals, and slaves. The cultivation of wheat and barley along with the plow were introduced to Ethiopia from Egypt. The plow, pulled by a pair of oxen, is still used by Ethiopian farmers. Other early contacts included Israel and southern Arabia, both of which had strong influences on Ethiopian history.

In the first millennium BCE, traders from southern Arabia crossed the Red Sea to Ethiopia and established settlements in the adjacent highlands. The settlers brought their religion and language and introduced stone architecture and irrigation. By the first century CE, one of these settlements, Aksum in Tigray, had grown into a powerful city that controlled trade between the Nile valley and Red Sea. Aksumite traders obtained gold and slaves from farther inland, which they traded through their Red Sea port of Adulis. Aksum developed into a kingdom based on a flourishing foreign trade that extended from the Mediterranean Sea to Persia and India. Powerful kings built important monuments; the most noted are huge obelisks, some standing nearly 100 feet high and with intricate carvings. One of the most important kings of Aksum was Ezana (320–360 CE), whose power extended from southern Arabia to the Nile valley. An inscription from his reign describes a military expedition to the Nile in approximately 350 CE, where his army destroyed Meroe, the capital of the Kingdom of Kush. Also during Ezana's rule, Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia. Ezana was converted in 333 CE by a Syrian monk who was attached to his court. The religion had strong ties with the Coptic Church in Alexandria, which appointed the Ethiopian bishops or *abun*. Christianity became the state religion and an indelible part of the national character.

Ethiopian tradition claims that the kings of Aksum were the indirect descendants of King Solomon of Judea (ca. 974–932 BCE) and the Queen of Sheba. The *Kabra Nagast*, the Ethiopian epic written in the Middle Ages, tells the story of the Queen of Sheba, an Ethiopian, who visited King Solomon in Jerusalem. The queen adopted the Jewish faith, which she brought back to Ethiopia. She also conceived a son, Menelik I, who became Ethiopia's first king,

establishing the Solomonic dynasty, which would last into the 20th century. Menelik is reported to have returned to Ethiopia with the Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred object in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The original ark is said to reside to this day in the Church of St. Mary Seyon (Zion) in Aksum.

The long decline of Aksum began in the seventh century with the rise of Islam. The Arab movement disrupted the Red Sea trade and cut off Aksum's source of wealth. Arabs moved into the lowlands and developed powerful states that confined the Aksumites to their highland city. Famines and rebellions further weakened the city. Late in the 10th century, Queen Gudit (Judith), described as a pagan or Jew, attacked Aksum. She burned churches and monasteries and killed the ruling king. After the destruction of Aksum, Ethiopia was mostly forgotten by the outside world, especially Europe, except for the legend of Prester John, the ruler of a mysterious Christian kingdom that existed outside the known world. Cut off from the rest of Christianity, the Ethiopian church developed its own unique form, incorporating many Judaic elements.

## Medieval Period

In the 12th century, the Zagwe Dynasty (c. 1137–1270) rose in Lasta in the highlands south of Tigray. Because the rulers, who were ethnic Agaw, did not claim descent from Solomon and Sheba, they were viewed as usurpers by the Orthodox church. The dynasty, however, made important religious contributions, and several kings were later canonized. The rulers were dedicated to spreading Christianity, but their greatest achievements were the stunning churches they built. At Lalibala, 11 churches were carved out of solid volcanic rock deep into the ground. The site became a place of pilgrimage and is known today for its amazing architectural achievements. The Zagwe Dynasty was overthrown in 1270 by Yekuno Amlak, an Amharic chief of Shewa farther to the south. Yekuno Amlek legitimized his takeover by claiming to be a descendant of the last Aksumite king, thus returning the throne to the Solomonic dynasty.

As the Shewan emperors consolidated their territorial authority, Christianity continued to spread across the highlands. Provincial governors paid taxes to the emperor and provided warriors for the emperor's enormous armies. The royal court resided in huge tented encampments that moved from one region to another two to three times a year. Although the highlands were mostly agrarian, trade was also important and often in the hands of Muslim merchants. Imports and exports had to pass through Muslim-controlled areas to reach ports on the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The export of slaves to Arabia gained in importance as did the import of firearms. Control of the trade routes inevitably produced conflict between Muslims and Christians. The most notable figure of this time was Emperor Amda Seyon (1312–1342). During his reign, he undertook campaigns into the eastern Muslim sultanates of Ifat and Adal, where he installed governors who paid tribute to the crown. Also during his reign the national epic *Kabra Nagast*, the legendary story of the Queen of Sheba, was written, and a code of law, the *Fetha Nagast*, was developed that was used in court judgments up to the 20th century. Rudimentary contact between Europe and Ethiopia was beginning. Ethiopia looked for alliances with other Christian states against the Muslims, and Europe wanted Christian aid from Africa to help retake Jerusalem from the Saracens. Delegations from Ethiopia arrived in Europe in 1306, and diplomatic missions from Europe arrived in Ethiopia in the early 15th century with Portuguese missions in 1508.

The 16th century saw a change in fortune for the empire as a result of two invasions, one military and one ethnic. Ahmad ibn Ibrahim "the Gagn," or left-

handed, took power in the Sultanate of Adal in the 1520s and called for a holy war against Christians. His warriors swept into the highlands, overwhelming the imperial army in Shewa and sending the emperor, Lebna Dingel, fleeing. By 1532, the Gragn had overrun all the eastern and southern highland provinces and was soon invading Tigray in the far north, almost destroying the whole empire. In the wake of the Muslim army, churches were stripped of their gold and burned, the countryside was laid waste, and inhabitants were forcibly converted to Islam. Before he died, Lebna Dengel appealed to Portugal for help against the invaders. A Portuguese force arrived in 1541, and the Gragn was finally defeated and killed in 1543. Battered by years of war, the Christian monarchy abandoned Shewa and moved to safer ground north of Lake Tana. To exploit their presence in Ethiopia, Portugal sent Jesuit missionaries to the royal court; these became important advisers, pressuring the emperors to convert to Catholicism, usually unsuccessfully.

Coinciding with the Muslim invasion was the migration of the Oromo. Oromo were a cattle-herding people who originated in northern Kenya and began migrating northward early in the 15th century. Taking advantage of the Muslim-Christian conflict, they began moving their herds into territories ravaged by war or the slave trade. Once established, the Oromo assimilated into the local population. By the later part of the 16th century, the Oromo had occupied much of Shewa and began to raid the Amhara provinces north of the Blue Nile. Under Jesuit influence and in the hopes of obtaining Portuguese firearms to fight the Oromo, Emperor Susneyos converted to Catholicism in 1622. He made Catholicism the state religion and banned Orthodox practices and traditions, actions that sparked bloody rebellions in which thousands were killed. Susneyos never received the firearms, and just before his death he returned to the Orthodox religion. His son, Fasiladas, on taking the throne, expelled the Jesuits.

Fasiladas (ruled 1632–1667) established his capital at Gondar in the mountains above Lake Tana. Gondar was the first permanent capital city since ancient Aksum and remained the capital for more than 200 years. Gondar sat along important caravan routes and quickly became a wealthy commercial center. Fasiladas and his successors built magnificent stone castles, palaces, and churches, and scholars from around the empire gravitated to Gondar, where arts and culture thrived, reminiscent of the European Renaissance. As warrior kings, emperors spent most of their time fighting Oromo incursions. After the murder in 1706 of Iyasu I, a series of short-term reigns that ended violently severely weakened the monarchy and allowed some Oromo to gain influence at court.

Angry provincial chiefs began to build up their armies and expand their own power. By 1755, the regional lords were in control, and emperors ruled in name only, having lost all authority. The next 100 years is known as the Era of the Princes or Era of Judges, referring to a biblical time when there was no king. The era is characterized by regional rivalries between independent lords, who were united only by their Orthodox faith. The chief military rivals were Tigray and the Amhara provinces of Gojjam and Begemder, which fought frequent wars. Early in the conflict, Scottish explorer James Bruce arrived in Gonder in 1769 just shortly after the murder of two emperors by the governor of Tigray. Bruce, who was seeking the source of the Blue Nile, documented the history and life of Gonder in his book *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*. The province of Shewa to the south was less involved in the regional wars, enabling its rulers to devote themselves to territorial expansion and stockpiling arms obtained through the slave trade with Arabia. It is fortunate that during the time of provincial rivalries, Ethiopia was not threatened by foreign invasion, but as the modern era approached the outside world began to take notice.



## Modern Period

From ancient times, Egypt had worried that the emperors of Ethiopia would cut off the Blue Nile, the source of the annual floods. At times of drought and famine, Egypt suspected the Ethiopian emperors of diverting the river and sent ambassadors to Ethiopia requesting the river be returned to its course. Ethiopia sometimes used the threat, impossible though it was, as leverage in negotiations with Egypt (Cheesman 1968, p. 47). As Egypt expanded southward in the 19th century, part of the aim was to control the sources of the Nile. In the 1820s, Egypt sent an army up the Blue Nile, but its advance into Ethiopia was stopped by the impenetrable Blue Nile gorge. Egypt's desire to control the Nile headwaters continued. Later in the 19th century, Europe began a quest for African territories. The "scramble for Africa" led to conflict with Ethiopia. In that former empire, three important leaders rose to power in the latter half of the century who reunited the provinces and fought for Ethiopian independence.

The first of these leaders was Tewodros II, a strong military leader who attracted a huge following. He eventually defeated the armies of the Amhara and Tigray provinces, claiming the throne in 1855. Tewodros moved his headquarters from Gonder eastward to Magdala and created a centralized and often brutal government. He confiscated rich church land and curbed the power of the nobility, who later turned against him. Egypt's expansion through Sudan began to threaten Ethiopia's borders and, desperate for weaponry, Tewodros detained British consular officials to pressure Britain to give him arms. Instead, Britain sent an expeditionary force that attacked Magdala in 1868. Lacking the support of the nobility, Tewodros could not withstand the attack and committed suicide. With the hostages freed, the British army withdrew. Tewodros was succeeded by Yohannes IV of Tigray who consolidated imperial authority over the provinces. Unlike Tewodros, Yohannes was a staunch supporter of the church and allowed a degree of provincial independence that gained him support from the clergy and nobility. His greatest challenges came from outside. In 1875, Egypt attacked with a large force but was decisively beaten by Yohannes's army. After a second attempt was also repelled, Egypt withdrew and abandoned its pursuit of Ethiopia only to be replaced by two new invaders. Italy, having gained a foothold on the Red Sea, began moving inland, but Yohannes's armies were successful in confining the Italians to the coast for the time being. From Sudan, the armies of the Islamic state of the Mahdi made raids into Ethiopia, even sacking the old city of Gonder. After fending off several attacks by the

Mahdists, Yohannes was killed in a battle at Metemma (Qallabat) on the Atbara River in 1889. He was succeeded by his archrival to the south, Menelik, the king of Shewa. Menelik II brought into the empire his southern territories as well as a huge number of firearms. He established Addis Ababa as the new capital city. Italy, France, and Britain had established colonies in the Horn of Africa and prepared to extend their spheres of influence into Ethiopia. In 1896, Italy invaded Tigray from its colony of Eritrea. Menelik, supported by provincial nobles, met the Italians at the Battle of Adwa. Both sides suffered heavy losses, but in the end Menelik's army was victorious. The defeat of a European power by an African force gave Menelik international prestige. Capitalizing on this victory, Menelik was able to secure Europe's recognition of Ethiopian independence. As part of the package, Menelik agreed to never disrupt the flow of the Blue Nile. In the following years, Menelik devoted energy to modernization projects until his death after a long illness in 1913.

During the 20th century, Ethiopia transitioned from an old traditional empire to a new modern state. Enemies surfaced again not only from the outside but also from within, eventually bringing down the ages-old Solomonic dynasty that had begun in the legendary past. Early in the century, a new generation was represented by the regent to the throne, *Ras* Tafari, who was later crowned Haile Selassie I. As regent, Tafari traveled to Europe, gaining acceptance for Ethiopia in the League of Nations; at home, he took steps to modernize education and the economy. After his coronation in 1930, Selassie enacted Ethiopia's first constitution, giving some authority to landowners but keeping absolute power for himself. Addis Ababa attracted foreign trade and developed into a commercial capital while the majority of people subsisted on traditional farming as tenants of wealthy landowners. The first map of the Blue Nile was made, revealing great hydroelectric-power potential, although little could be done at the time. A new Anglo–Egyptian treaty gave Egypt the power to veto any project along the Upper Nile's waterways.

A new challenge to independence came again from Italy under Mussolini, who invaded Ethiopia in October 1935. This time Ethiopian troops were no match against severe bombing and the use of mustard gas. The country was quickly overrun, and Selassie was forced to flee. Ethiopia was joined to Eritrea and Italian Somalia to become Africa Orientale Italiana. Many treasures were looted from Ethiopia and taken to Rome, including coronation crowns, important paintings, and a towering obelisk from Aksum. High-ranking nobility, as well as the educated class, were executed. Mussolini intended to settle Italians in the

highlands to operate commercial farms and develop raw materials to bolster the Italian economy. Instead, Ethiopia became a financial burden. Italy was never able to control rural areas, especially in Begemder and Gojjam, where resistance fighters known as “patriots,” harassed convoys and garrisons. With the outbreak of World War II, Britain came to Ethiopia’s aid and in January 1941 launched three assaults into Ethiopia. From the north, British forces attacked Eritrea. In the south, British troops marched from Kenya through the Ethiopian lowlands toward Addis Ababa. From the west, a special mission known as the “Gideon Force,” led by Major Orde Wingate, brought the emperor into rebel-held Gojjam to join with patriots and march through the Blue Nile regions to Addis Ababa. Haile Selassie triumphantly entered the city on May 5, 1941. The last battle in recapturing the country took place at Gonder on November 27, 1941.

In the decades following liberation, Selassie became a leader in African affairs, and Addis Ababa became the headquarters of international organizations. With aid from the United States, the tattered economy and educational system improved. A hydroelectric-power station was constructed on the Blue Nile near Tis Isat Falls, bringing electricity to new areas. Development mostly benefited the larger cities while rural areas still functioned under the old feudal system. Even with an updated constitution, the government remained autocratic. By the 1960s, discontent began to emerge over slow economic growth and lack of reform. Eritrea, joined to Ethiopia in 1962, began a long 30-year struggle for independence led by the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF). An undeclared war with Somalia flared up over control of the Ogaden region in the south, and tensions with Sudan arose over Ethiopian support of the southern rebels. Discontent grew among labor unions over mounting costs and among students whose slogan for social reform was “Land to the Tiller!” Even in the military, the backbone of the government, troops began to rebel. A breaking point came in the early 1970s with a disastrous famine in Tigray that the government covered up. A British correspondent finally broke the news, triggering a series of strikes and military mutinies. By 1974, Marxist radicals had taken control of key military institutions. Ministers and aristocrats were arrested and executed, and on September 12, 1974, the aging emperor was deposed and imprisoned. Selassie died 11 months later.

A military junta known as the “Derg,” led by Mengistu Haile Maryam, declared a socialist state and began reorganizing Ethiopia along communist lines. Ties were established with the Soviet Union, and banks, businesses, factories, and land were nationalized. Mengistu became head of state, executing

anyone who opposed him. Political violence became the norm. Opposition to the Derg was crushed violently by revolutionary defense squads. Between 1977 and 1979, thousands of people were hunted down and killed, even in the streets, in what was called the “Red Terror.” Eritrean resistance fighters were pushed into a couple of small northern enclaves, and the Derg was able to put down a Somali invasion in 1978 with Soviet and Cuban aid. Gradually, opposition fronts, mostly in rural areas, began to take shape along ethnic lines, most notably the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF). Fighting became constant in many regions, draining the country’s finances, and the socialist economic policies began to fail. In 1984–85, another severe famine occurred, one made worse by the government’s refusal to allow aid to afflicted regions. Undaunted, in 1987 the People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was declared, with Mengistu Haile Maryam, the country’s president, presiding over a repressive and economically failing government. The collapse of the Soviet Union took away vital support and was a blow to the Derg. Regional liberation fronts led by the TPLF in Ethiopia and EPLF in Eritrea began to win victories and merged together. In 1990, the liberation armies began to march against Addis Ababa. With the government on the verge of collapse, Mengistu fled the country in 1991, and the rule of the Derg collapsed. Eritrea became independent in 1993, and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was declared in 1995.

Ethiopia remains a poor country of more than 80 million people with a high rate of illiteracy and an agrarian economy based on rainfall, which makes it subject to drought. Development of its abundant water resources is seen as a way to improve the Ethiopian economy. Agriculture can be improved through irrigation and water storage. Hydroelectric power can bring improvements within the country as well as provide an export commodity. Along these lines, Ethiopia is looking to develop the potential of the Blue Nile and other rivers. After an agreement in 2010 between the Upper Nile states that endorses their right to exploit their own resources, Ethiopia has begun building a megadam, the Great Renaissance Dam, on the Blue Nile near the Sudanese border. This dam and others Ethiopia intends to build are once again bringing Ethiopia into conflict with Egypt and with it rumors of war. A conflict seems to have been diverted, but the control and use of the vital Nile waters will continue to be an issue in the future.

**See also:** [Blue Nile River](#); [Bruce, James](#); [Gonder](#); [Haile Selassie I](#); [Lake Tana](#); [Menelik II](#); [Mengistu Haile Mariam](#); [Wingate, Orde](#); [Yohannes IV](#).

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# F

## **FASHODA (KODOK)**

Fashoda is now known as Kodok in South Sudan. The place was first chosen by the Shilluk kings, or *reth*, to commemorate the place where their cultural hero, Nyikang, the first reth, settled. It was a holy place where the reth was able to mediate between the people and *Jouk*, the Shilluk god. Until today, Fashoda and now Kodok has been the residence of the Shilluk king. The name change was done to mollify the feelings of the French, who, in 1898, attempted to claim the place as part of Equatorial French Africa, which they hoped would stretch from Gabon on the Atlantic coast to Ethiopia, splitting apart British claims to the region of Cairo to the southern cape of Africa.

The French set out to claim a continuous strip of African lands from the Niger River to the Nile River, and this could only be done by sending an expedition to officially claim the Upper Nile. The Upper Nile had been claimed by the khedive of Egypt, but his claim was in jeopardy by the Mahdi's revolt in Sudan, and he did not control the area. With the Anglo–Egyptian invasion of Sudan, it was likely the British and the khedive would press their claims once again. In 1897, a French expedition headed out from Gabon led by Major Jean-Baptiste Marchand. Two other expeditions were to head west from Djibouti and Ethiopia and meet Marchand in Sudan; however, they did not make it and had to return to their bases. Fourteen months later, Marchand and his troops arrived at Fashoda before the British and claimed the area for France. Three weeks later, the British under Kitchener arrived, and both sides demanded the other withdraw. It was a cordial standoff between the two, but the French occupied an abandoned Egyptian fort and were not in a weakened condition. The British were a greater force, and the British public was in a war mood.

The French foreign minister, Théophile Delcassé, did not want a confrontation with Britain because he wanted their help against a possible German attack. To divert French public opinion, he allowed the Dreyfus Affair

to be reopened in the press. The French troops under Marchand were withdrawn, and the two powers agreed to divide the watershed of the Congo and the Nile, with the Nile going to Britain and the Congo to the French. In a gesture of goodwill, the British changed the name of the town from Fashoda to Kodok, which was closer to the Shilluk name of Kothok.

Today, the population is around 7,000 people with another nearly 2,000 refugees from the current civil war in South Sudan. The town was the scene of several massacres by the Sudanese army during the long struggle for South Sudanese liberation and at least one such atrocity since independence. The peace the town is supposed to harbor, the peace between Jouk and the reth, where the reth is to mediate peace, seems unable to bring peace to the land for the moment.

**See also:** [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Kitchener, Horatio Herbert](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#); [Shilluk](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## FAYYUM

The Fayyum or Fayoum is a large oasis that lies to the west of the Nile valley in Middle Egypt, only 65 miles (104 kilometers) south of Cairo. The oasis is in a depression that originally filled when the Nile was at flood; since then, a Neolithic lake, whether Qarun or Moeris, has provided freshwater and fish for the inhabitants. In fact, Fayyum is the site of the earliest settled life and where ancient Egyptian culture first began (Wilkinson 2014, p. 218). The name “Fayyum” derives from the Coptic *Pi-yum* or *Peiom*, which was the name of the lake. In ancient Egyptian, the oasis was also named after the lakes He-resy (southern lake) or the *Mer-wer* (great lake), which the Greeks turned into Moeris (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 131). The oasis is 40 miles (65 kilometers) from east to west and is 144 feet (44 meters) below sea level (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 131). It covers a total area of at least 490 square miles (or 1,270 square kilometers), with the lake occupying the northwestern corner.

The lake is connected to the Nile River by the *Bahr Yusuf* canal. Local folklore says the canal was built by prophet Yusuf, or the Old Testament figure Joseph. The story of Joseph is also in the Koran and is nearly identical with that of the Old Testament. The canal begins its journey to the oasis at the town of Ihnasya al-Madinah, the site of the ancient city of Henen-nesut, which the ancient Greeks called *Herakleopolis Magna* from the Greek hero Heracles, whom they associated with the Egyptian god Herishef. However, the canal took its name from the Ayyubid ruler Salah al-Din ibn Yusuf, who redug the canal in historic times. Fayyum in ancient times became the object of interest for the pharaohs of the 12th Dynasty when they built several pyramid tombs nearby. The Bahr Yusuf enters the oasis at the pyramid of Lahun, two miles (three kilometers) north to the modern town called Lahun. The pyramid was built by Pharaoh Senwosret II. Other pyramids are found to the east of Fayyum: the

pyramid at Maidum from the reign of Pharaoh Huni (ruled 2599–2575 BCE) and his successor Snofru (2575–2551 BCE) from the Third and Fourth Dynasties; al-Lisht from the Middle Kingdom when the capital was moved from Thebes to Itjtawy, located somewhere between Fayyum and Memphis; and Hawarah, located near where the Bahr Yusuf branches into two, one branch flowing north and one flowing to the main town of the oasis, Madinat Fayyum and Lake Qarun (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 131).

## Bahr Yusuf

Bahr Yusuf is a canal that connects the Nile River to the Fayyum oasis and Lake Qarun. The canal is 15 miles (24 kilometers) in length and 16.5 feet (five meters) deep. The oasis itself is below sea level, and the canal followed a natural gap in the land to bring the water to the lake. The canal was built under the reign of Amenemhat or Amenophis III (ruled 1844–1797 BCE) of the 12th Dynasty (1991–1783 BCE). Under him, Fayyum was improved, agricultural production increased, and the amount of water reaching the lake allowed the lake shore to expand as well. To do this, a dam was built on the shore of the Nile, and another was located near the lake that regulated the amount of water into the lake. Both dams were called the *Ha-Uar Dam*. In late antiquity, the canal was neglected, and eventually the condition of the lake became what it is today—shallow and salty. The Bahr Yusuf branches once it reaches Madinat Fayyum, with one branch heading north being used for irrigation and not reaching the lake. Once at Madinat Fayyum, it branches into eight separate canals to feed the agriculture of the oasis or to end up in the lake.

Near where Bahr Yusuf enters the oasis stands the ruins of Kom Medinat Ghurab, the pleasure palace of the 18th and 19th Dynasty pharaohs. Many of the pharaohs liked the lush countryside of Fayyum and spent much of their leisure time there, although most of the objects found date from the reign of Amenophis III (ruled 1391–1353 BCE) and his wife, Teye (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 130). Other pharaohs such as Tuthmosis III (ruled 1479–1425 BCE) used the palace to house their numerous political wives from Syrian dependent states. The main town of the oasis, Madinat Fayyum or Fayyum City, is the ancient *Shedyt* that the Greeks called *Krocodilopolis*, whose god was Sobek, the crocodile god. The city had sacred crocodiles that were fed by the people in hopes the god would be satisfied and not take any of them (Wilkinson 2014, p. 217).

During the Greco-Roman period, the oasis saw its greatest period of development. The size of the lake was reduced to recover more land for farming for Macedonian settlers (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 131). New towns such as Karanis (modern Kom Aushim) were built, and the main settlement was renamed Arsinoe, one of the names of many Ptolemaic queens. Fayyum portraits, well drawn on wood, developed to replace older conventions in mummification, and the portraits are seen as an adoption of Roman realism in art such as in the villas of Pompeii.

In the Christian era, Fayyum had a large, thriving community (Vivian 1992, p. 172). Several churches and monasteries were built, and many of them remain today such as Dayr Abu Lifa, Dayr al-‘Azab, Dayr Abana Samawil, and Dayr al-

Malak Ghabrial. In the early Islamic period, Muslim control of the oasis was limited, and it was known for fomenting revolution. In the Fatamid era, production levels and the population fell as a result of invasion, and the slow decline of the oasis continued into the modern era (Vivian 1992, p. 172). Fayyum began to recover under Muhammad 'Ali, who built roads linking the oasis with Cairo and Beni Suef and improved the infrastructure. Later in the 19th century, Fayyum was linked by rail and telegraph to the Nile valley and Cairo. Today the oasis is prosperous and has a reputation for excellent vegetables, fruit, and fowl, especially chickens. Recently, with the revival of the Coptic church in Egypt after the 1967 war with Israel, many of the once abandoned or nearly abandoned monasteries now have active communities.



**The ancient town of Kom Aushim, or Karanis, is located just to the north of Fayyum. It was founded by Ptolemy II and was inhabited until the early fifth century CE. (John A. Shoup)**

Starting in the 20th century, the oasis has seen a growth of tourism. The Egyptian royal family built a hunting lodge on the lakeshore and used it as a country residence, especially during the twice yearly migration of birds to and from Europe. The royal family and their guests hunted for ducks and geese in particular, and today the tradition continues for wealthy Egyptians and Europeans. In addition to hunting, the large numbers of birds attract bird-watchers and conservationists. In the 1960s, Wadi al-Rayyan was turned into a water catchment for agriculture and tourism, and now Egyptians longing for a relaxing weekend in lush green lands and water come every week in large numbers to Wadi al-Rayyan. Fayyum is an easy one-hour car ride from Cairo,

making it an attractive weekend spot for Cairenes. Two paved highways lead to and from Cairo, and another road takes drivers south to the city of Beni Suef.

## Lake Moeris or Qarun

Lake Qarun is located in the Fayyum oasis and was once a major freshwater source. Ancient writers commented on its color and the fact that it was an inland sea. Called *Mer-wer* (the Great Sea or Lake) in ancient Egyptian, the name was corrupted by the Greeks to Moeris. In the past, the lake was much larger than it is today and was originally a depression filled by the Nile River during the annual flood season. The pathway the Nile flood took was excavated and made into a canal in the reign of Pharaoh Amenemhat or Amenophis III in the 12th Dynasty. Lake Qarun is the third largest lake in Egypt. It has a long history as one of the earliest sites of ancient Egyptian civilization. The lake today is 26 miles (42 kilometers) long and 5.5 miles (nine kilometers) wide. It covers an area of 83 square miles (214 square kilometers), which is much reduced since the Roman era. Local folklore tells of a Roman governor named Caron, whose neglect and rapacious appetite for taxes caused the people to leave, which led to the canal and lake falling into ruin. The lake was reduced in size for land reclamation by the Ptolemies who wanted land to induce more settlers from their native Macedonia to come to Egypt. Today, the lake is approximately one-quarter of its original size, and it suffers from salt due to the amount of annual evaporation. Nonetheless, it remains a major attraction for migrating birds and tourism. Fishing is still possible both with traditional means and modern fishing techniques. Fish from the lake is sent daily to markets in Cairo and Beni Suef.

**See also:** [Cairo](#); [Egyptology](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#).

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## FELUCCA (FALUKKAH)

The term “felucca” or, more properly, *falukkah* in Arabic, refers to the light, swift river craft used in the past to transport both goods and people up and down the Nile River from the Mediterranean coast into Sudan. Many different types of felucca are employed, depending on their main use—from light, shallow draft fishing crafts called *zahari* used in Lake Manzalah to the heavy transport types that are large enough to use as many as three lanteen sails.

In the early decades of the 19th century, Egypt’s ruler Muhammad ‘Ali (ruled 1805–1848) developed a fleet of felucca for use on the Red Sea that he used to supply his troops fighting against the first Saudi state (Horgan 1970). Felucca had long been used on the Red Sea for trade between the Arabian Peninsula, Sudan, the Horn of Africa, and Egypt. The largest feluccas were built for sea voyages, but the difference between feluccas and dhows were in the construction of the hull and the amount of draft each type pulled. Even the largest felucca is constructed with the goal of being light and fast but not being able to stand up to the weather of the Indian Ocean. Nonetheless, felucca were used in the Mediterranean Sea, though mostly for fishing close to shore rather than long-haul transportation.

The felucca is mainly a river craft and the largest on the Nile River is called a *dhahabiyyah*. These craft are long—up to 40 feet (12 meters)—with a cabin at the back end (Lane 1989, p. 331). Such ships were used in festivals and holidays from the Fatamid Dynasty (973–1171) to modern times, especially to mark the Prophet’s birthday and the yearly opening of the canal that mark the start of the Nile flood. In addition, the *dhahabiyyah* was selected for the first Nile cruises by European travelers; in fact, the Thomas Cook Company had a fleet of these watercraft built in the first half of the 19th century, and these were not replaced until 1899 when the company invested in steamships.

As the larger types of felucca are replaced with more modern and faster forms of transportation, smaller felucca with only one sail and no cabin are still available and are popular with Egyptians for a relaxing afternoon or evening ride

and for tourists. For the more adventuresome tourist, it is still possible to sail from Aswan to Luxor or vice versa in a felucca. Today, the felucca is still built as a river craft but in metal rather than in wood. The stern of the ship is still broad with a wide rudder, a feature from the past when the craft frequently ran aground because of the quickly shifting nature of the river. The Nile has many whirlpools and wind shifts that often force a helmsman to hold onto the sail with one hand and steer with the other.

**See also:** [Aswan](#); [Luxor](#).

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## GIZA

Giza (*al-Jizah* in Arabic) is the name of both a city and a province. The city is one of the three main subsections of Greater Cairo located on the west bank of the Nile River and is the third largest city in Egypt with an estimated population of 3.6 million. The city is the capital of the province, and though part of Greater Cairo, it has its own mayor and governing council. As of 2012, the city of Giza is the second largest suburb in the world, tied with Incheon, South Korea. In 2011, Giza Province was expanded when the desert region of Sixth of October was combined with Giza. The one main populated area of Sixth of October is the Bahariyah oasis, one of a string of oases that follow an ancient Nile parallel to the modern Nile. Egyptians call the area the New Valley or Wadi al-Jalid (or Galid) from Kharjah (Khargah) Oasis in the south to Bahariyah in the north. The oasis communities were the target of ambitious agricultural development plans in the 1970s and 1980s in the time of Anwar al-Sadat, but they were abandoned by the 1990s.

The city of Giza includes several modern developments such as al-Muhandisin or Engineers District, that began in the 1950s as a home for professionals. Other such districts were named for other professions such as al-Atibba' (medical doctors) and al-Mu'allimin (teachers and professors). Only al-Muhadisiin has kept its name. It is an example of a successful housing project from the early years of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir's administration. Giza City also has the district of Duqqi where both the oldest zoo in Africa and the Mediterranean is located, the Cairo Zoo or Giza Zoo, which opened in 1891. The zoo occupies the *harim* (women's quarters) gardens of a palace built in the 1870s by Khadawi Isma'il (ruled 1863–1879). Although part of the grounds next to the Nile were sold for luxury apartment blocks in the early decades of the 20th century, the rest has remained untouched. The zoo includes a bridge built by French architect Gustave Eiffel. Although other iron bridges built in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries are rumored to have been designed by Eiffel, established proof is lacking that he built any in addition to the suspension bridge at the zoo.

Giza includes many villages from Kirdasah in the north to Munib in the south, and some of the city's neighborhoods look more like rural villages than part of a major urban center. Kirdasah has its own history as a long-standing independent village that was the eastern terminus of the trade route that linked central Africa to the oasis of Siwa near the Egyptian–Libyan border and the Nile. Kirdasah was an important producer of blue-and-white-striped cotton cloth used as women's outer modesty garments in the oases of Egypt's Western Desert to Kufra in southern Libya. Kirdasah became a major place for locals and tourists to buy Bedouin carpets from the Western Desert. More recently, several Giza neighborhoods, including Imbaba, Kirdasah, and Munib have been suspected of harboring Islamist cells.

Giza houses the world's largest camel market (Mostafa 2015). Originally, the market had been held near the Citadel in Cairo, but it was moved first to Imbaba and later in the 1990s to Burgash 38 kilometers south of Giza City. Animals are brought from Somalia, Sudan, and Libya, but the market is dominated by Sudanese merchants. Those animals from Sudan and Somalia make their way overland to Daraw on the Nile near Aswan, where they are then boarded on trains to take them to Cairo. Most of the camels are sold for meat; in Egypt, camel meat is thinly sliced for fast-food sandwiches called *shwarmah* in Arabic, similar to Turkish *döner kebab* or Greek *gyros*. The market has become a tourist site and cameleers sell whips, camel sticks, and leather bags, while local merchants sell “Sudanese” clothes, tools, riding equipment, horse and camel decorations, and other items needed by cameleers as well as items to sell to tourists.

To deal with Giza's massive traffic issues, authorities decided to build a ring road that runs dangerously close to the Giza plateau. In the past, the main east–west street in Giza was Pyramids Road, which linked directly to the Kubri Giza (Giza Bridge) and across Roda Island to Salah Salim Street, the main ring road around the congested old city of Cairo. In the past, Pyramids Road was easily clogged with heavy traffic because it connected not only to the main desert highway north to Alexandria, south to Fayyum, and west to Bahariyah linked to Pyramids Road but also to the newly constructed Sixth of October city, one of the satellites to Cairo built by Anwar al-Sadat. When the new ring road was first proposed, organizations such as the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) opposed it because the road would threaten

the major archeological site of the Giza Pyramids. The government of Hosni Mubarak went ahead with the road, which also required building a new bridge across the Nile near Minya much farther south. The ring road not only threatens the last remaining Seven Wonders of the Ancient World but also a good deal of valuable agricultural land.

Both Giza City and the province contain important archeological sites. The two best known are the pyramids of Giza and Saqqarah. Lesser known yet important sites include the ruins of Mit Rahina (site of ancient Memphis) and the pyramids at Abu Ruwash, Zawiyat al-'Arayan, Abu Sir, and Dahshur as well as the sun temple at Abu Ghurab. The ruins date from the First Dynasty to the Byzantine era with numerous reuses of sites including in Saqqarah, the Monastery of St. Jeremiah, a former Coptic monastery.

The two most important sites in Giza are the pyramids on the Giza plateau and the site of Saqqarah. The Giza Pyramids date from the Fourth Dynasty (2613–2494 BCE) of the Old Kingdom and contain not only the three famous great pyramids of Khufu (2551–2528 BCE), Khafre (2520–2494 BCE), and Menkaure (2494–2472 BCE) but also many satellite pyramids and mastabas. The site includes the Great Sphinx, whose face is thought to be a likeness of Pharaoh Khafre; stone paved causeways that connect valley mortuary tombs to the main pyramids; and numerous mastabas or rectangular buildings that served as tombs before the pyramid concept was developed.

Even though the first excavations at the Giza Pyramids began in 1853 (by Auguste Mariette), work still continues today with new discoveries every year. For example, in 1993, Egyptian archeologist Zahi Hawass discovered the foundations of another pyramid at the site (Lehner 2007, p. 69). Among the most interesting discoveries are the boat pits around the main pyramids first uncovered in 1952 (Lehner 2007, p. 118). Subsequently, more boat pits have been found not only at Giza but also around other Old Kingdom tombs and temples such as the sun temple at Abu Gharab. One of the ancient ships has been reassembled from the cedar planks found in a pit and is now being preserved in a special, controlled environment museum at the foot of Khufu's pyramid.



**Men and women on camels in front of the Giza Pyramids, Egypt, c. 1906. (Library of Congress)**

The tomb complex at Saqqarah is also under constant excavation, and new discoveries are made all the time. The main pyramid at Saqqarah is the famous step pyramid of the Third Dynasty (2649–2575 BCE), the Pyramid of Djoser (ruled 2630–2611 BCE). The step pyramid grew from the original mastaba planned for the pharaoh's tomb to the first pyramid. Its complex included the Heb Sed ceremonial court for the periodic proof of the pharaoh's physical power. Many of the associated buildings are constructed to look like prestone structures with fake bound papyrus bundles and fake wooden beams. These are the first major stone buildings in ancient Egypt, and the name of architect, Imhotep, was preserved; by the time of the New Kingdom (1550–1070 BCE), he had been deified. In American popular culture, Imhotep was the mummy brought back to life in two films, *The Mummy* (1999) and *The Mummy Returns*

(2001). Renovation attempts at the foundation and underground chambers during the winter of 2014–15 resulted in the step pyramid sinking several meters (yards).

Saqqarah also includes several Old Kingdom mastabas that contain some of the best art from the period. Among the best are the painted reliefs of the Princess Idut. Other mastabas with outstanding art are those of Mereruka, Kagemmi, and Ankhmahor. In later periods, Egyptians seemed to want burial near tombs from the Old Kingdom, and the New Kingdom Pharaoh Horemheb (ruled 1319–1307 BCE) built his first tomb—before he became pharaoh—in Saqqarah, as did the New Kingdom court official Maya. During the Persian period (343–332 BCE), deep pit tombs were developed to stop tomb robbing.

Just to the south of the Saqqarah site is another pyramid field at Dahshur that includes several Old Kingdom mastaba tombs as well as several Middle Kingdom (2040–1991 BCE) pyramids built in mud brick. The Old Kingdom Pharaoh Snefru (2597–2547 BCE) built three pyramids, two at Dahshur including his Red Pyramid. He built his third at Meidum but was dissatisfied with it and moved to Dahshur. His first attempt at Dahshur, called today the Bent Pyramid, was built on a poor surface with too much sand and gravel that shifted and moved. As a result, the top slopes too much inward. The Red Pyramid was Snefru's third attempt; once that was completed, he returned to Meidum and had that pyramid also completed.

Since the early 2000s, the Egyptian government has been planning to build a new museum of antiquities near the Giza Pyramids. The plan is to maintain the original building on Tahrir Square, and the new museum would house the numerous objects that simply cannot fit in the old museum for lack of room. The idea has not been fully developed, but it seems the new Egyptian government wants the plan to proceed.

**See also:** [Cairo](#); [Egyptology](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#); [Museum of Egyptian Antiquities: The Egyptian Museum, Cairo](#).

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## GONDER

The city of Gonder is located in the northwestern highlands of Ethiopia just north of Lake Tana, the head of the Blue Nile River. Gonder was established in the mid-17th century and served as Ethiopia's imperial, cultural, and religious capital for 200 years. At its height, Gonder's influence spread through the upper Blue Nile basin and the Ethiopian highlands. As political power moved eastward in the 19th and 20th centuries, Gonder's influence declined. The city is now most known for its magnificent castles and churches.

Gonder was founded in 1636 by Emperor Fasiladas (r. 1632–1667). Prior to its founding, the imperial court traveled from one province to another in large, mobile encampments. Gonder was the empire's first permanent capital. The city sits on a ridge 7,000 feet (2,133 meters) above sea level, protected by mountains and watered by two rivers that flow south through a fertile plain to Lake Tana 20 miles away. Important caravan routes crossed the area from the Nile valley to the west and the Red Sea to the northeast. Ivory, gold, and slaves, lucrative trade items, were readily obtained south of the Blue Nile. Fasiladas spent most of his time fighting rebellious regional chiefs and Oromo tribesmen who were encroaching from the south. When in Gonder, he pursued his interest in architecture. He built the first and largest of the Gonder castles, a three-story stone structure with corner towers reminiscent of medieval European fortresses. He also built bridges, churches, and a two-story stone bath house with a pool watered by one of Gonder's rivers. Gonder attracted a variety of people, including courtiers, Christian clergy, Muslim traders, and Ethiopian Jewish craftsmen. The city rapidly grew in size and population, which numbered about 25,000 by the end of his reign (Henze 2000, p. 101),

Gonder reached its height under Iyasu I, the Great (r. 1682–1706). Like his grandfather, Fasiladas, Iyasu was a warrior and builder. He built a magnificent

palace in the royal compound decorated with precious gems, gold, and ivory. On the outskirts of Gonder he built the church of Debre Berhan Selassie with its richly painted walls and ceiling with large-eyed angels looking down. Scholars and teachers from around the country were invited to Gonder, turning the city into a flourishing center of art, music, and literature as well as religious learning. At the center of the city lay the royal compound, site of rich pageantry and ceremony. Outside the walls of the royal compound was a large market and nearby were the homes of the nobles. The highest-ranking religious leaders had their own compounds, which also housed priests and monks and were places of sanctuary. Wealthy Muslim traders and Jewish artisans lived in their own quarters segregated from Christians. Toward the beginning of the 18th century, Gonder's population had reached an estimated 70,000 (Marcus 1994, p. 41).

Iyasu's reign ended tragically. Saddened by the death of his favorite concubine, he took up residency in a monastery on an island in Lake Tana, where he was murdered in 1706 by his son and successor. Afterward the monarchy suffered through a series of short-term rulers who were either murdered or deposed. Although in political decline, Gonder continued to thrive as an economic and cultural center and emperors still added important structures to the royal compound. Emperor Bakaffa (r. 1716–1721) was able to bring back some stability during his nine-year reign and his wife, Empress Mantuab, exerted substantial influence for several more decades.

Mantuab became regent to Bakaffa's infant son, Iyasu II (r. 1721–1755), the last emperor of the era to have full power. Iyasu enjoyed a luxurious court life and under Mantuab's influence. When he married an Oromo princess, nobles who looked on the Oromo as inferior were angry. Taking advantage of imperial weakness, provincial chiefs built up their armies and increased their power. By the time Iyasu died, the royal coffers were empty and regional lords had become independent. Mantuab was again made regent to Iyasu's young half-Oromo son, Iyo'as, but control soon fell to the powerful lord of the northern province of Tigray, *Ras* Mikael Sehul, who entered Gonder with his armies in 1757 and took over the city. Mikael murdered Iyo'as and his successor and became the real power. James Bruce, the Scottish explorer, arrived in Gonder in 1770 on his expedition to reach the source of the Nile and was introduced to the court of *Ras* Mikael and the dowager empress. He wrote colorful descriptions of Ethiopian life that later fascinated as well as horrified Europeans. *Ras* Mikael was deposed soon after, and civil war became the norm with each regional chief vying for power. Gonder continued to be the imperial center, although the emperors



became mere figureheads and puppets of the warlords, a situation that lasted 100 years.

By the middle of the 19th century, commercial and political power was shifting to the east and Gonder was in decline. Emperor Tewodros II (r. 1855–1868) reestablish the supremacy of the monarchy and moved his headquarters east to Magdala. When Gonder rebelled against his brutal rule, he burned the city and killed thousands of its inhabitants. Later in the century, Gonder suffered a devastating attack from Sudan. Mahdist rebels, followers of Mohammad Ahmad, the Mahdi, had established an Islamic state along the Nile in Sudan. In 1888, the Mahdist army invaded Gojjam, the province encircled by the Blue Nile, defeated the provincial ruler and continued to Gonder, sacking the city, and looting and burning churches. Only the church of Debre Berhan Selassie was spared, which is said to have been protected by a swarm of bees. Gonder again became a battleground in 1941 when it was bombed by British forces, bringing the Italian occupation of Ethiopia to an end.

Gonder now serves as a provincial capital, but its true significance is historical. The castles of Gonder are a major tourist attraction, and the Fasil Ghebbi, the royal compound, is on the UNESCO world heritage site list. The bath house built by Fasiliadas is still used each year for the Timkat celebration commemorating the baptism of Christ.

**See also:** [Bruce, James](#); [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Lake Tana](#).

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## GONDOKORO

Gondokoro is the name of an island in the White Nile River as well as a well-known trading station located 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) south of Khartoum on the White Nile. It was one of the important staging places for the final expeditions to prove the source of the Nile by Samuel and Florence Baker and where the Speke and Grant expedition were to be resupplied by British consul general John Pertherick in 1863. In 1839, Salim Qapudan, a Turkish sea captain in the pay of Muhammad ‘Ali, was able to penetrate the Sudd barrier and make it as far south as Gondokoro (Collins 2008, pp. 13–14). Regular transit of the Sudd was still in the future, but the growing demand for ivory in Europe for piano keys and billiard balls drove the need to supply ever more ivory (“Juba History” n.d.). Located on the east bank of the White Nile, Gondokoro was a good place to accumulate the ivory for shipments north; by 1851, 12 shiploads of ivory were sent north (Collins 2008, p. 16).

The rulers of Egypt were convinced they needed to control the slave trade and bring it to an end. The Khedive Isma‘il (1854–1879) set about to bring Sudan closer under Egypt and extended rail service, steamships on the Nile, telegraph, and postal service in Sudan. He also appointed several European Christians to governorships in Sudan to end slavery, but they were not popular with local Sudanese. Among the Europeans he appointed was Samuel Baker, who was the first governor of Equatorial Sudan from 1869. Baker was based in Gondokoro and was familiar with the region, having explored it and discovering Lake Albert in 1864 (Collins 2008, p. 18).

Baker renamed Gondokoro Isma‘ilia in honor of the Egyptian khedive and formally annexed the entire region for the khedive (Moorehead 2000, p. 160).

He then set about conducting wars of conquest. With a guard of 40 men nicknamed the 40 thieves, he proceeded into Bunyoro, the place where Baker had been pushed to the limits by the continued demands for gifts by King Kumrasi in the past. But Kumrasi was dead, and in his place was the young king, Kabarega. Baker decided to use influence rather than force and built a government house at the Bunyoro capital, now the modern city of Masindi, and annexed the kingdom in 1872. Kabarega was now threatened by Baker and tried to kill him and his men, but despite being outnumbered, the combined firepower of Baker's 40 thieves were able to beat them. Despite the victory, Baker was forced to retreat and set up his headquarters at Fatiko (currently inside Uganda), which remained his "capital" until he left the service of the khedive.

The Egyptian soldiers took local women for wives and began the dialect of southern Sudan called Juba Arabic, which mixed with Bari, a local language ("Juba History"). When he became governor-general of Sudan, Gordon moved the garrison to Lado to better hold the region. He built several other forts along the Nile. Gondokoro remained important into the early 20th century when Winston Churchill visited in 1907. In 1919, a group of Dinka warriors attacked the station, and in 1920 a military expedition was sent to quell the rebellion. In 1922, a new station was opened just up the river on the west bank called Juba, and Gondokoro began to fade. Although a town still stands at Gondokoro, it has lost importance to Juba, which is located only a few miles upstream.

**See also:** [Baker, Samuel, and Baker, Florence](#); [Dinka](#); [Gordon, Charles George](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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## GORDON, CHARLES GEORGE (1833–1885)

Charles George Gordon was called “Chinese” Gordon for his service in China for the emperor against the Taiping Rebellion, and he was also known as Gordon of Khartoum for his subsequent service for the khedive of Egypt. He was the son of a British general and graduated from the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in 1852. His bravery seemed to seek martyrdom, and from his first active duty in the Crimean War to his last in Sudan he sought to encounter his enemies armed only with a cane walking stick.

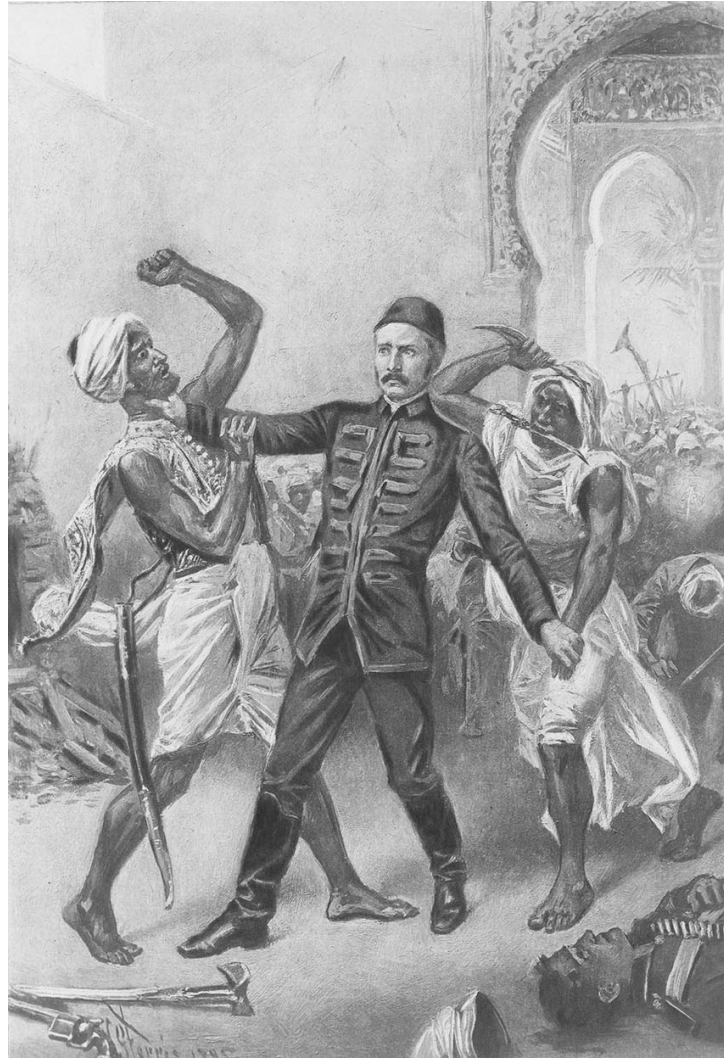
Gordon arrived in the Crimea in 1855 and served at the siege of Sevastopol. Following the war, his surveying skills earned him a place on the international commission to mark out the new border between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. He returned to England in 1858 and was assigned a teaching position in the military academy at Chatham in 1859. In 1860, he volunteered to serve in China; northern China was occupied by the British until 1862. The Taiping Rebellion, which had brought in the British, began in 1851 and initially had great success against the armies of the emperor. Northern provinces were occupied by the British in an attempt to end the rebellion, but in 1862 the British negotiated their withdrawal from areas of China that were not claimed by them. Gordon was appointed to command the imperial forces and had numerous victories that earned his army the name “Ever Victorious Army.” The rebellion was finally crushed in 1864 with the capture of Changzhou. He was given the title of *Tidu* or captain general by the emperor himself.

In 1873, Isma‘il, the khedive of Egypt, offered him the governorship of Equatoria on the upper reaches of the Nile, taking the place of Samuel Baker. He served as the governor of the province until 1875, and during this time he made plans for the expansion of the communications systems, including a steamer on Lake Albert and the suppression of the slave trade. He ran into conflicts with the government in Khartoum and proposed to leave, but Isma‘il asked him to stay and conferred on him the title of *pasha* in 1877 (Collins 2008, p. 19).

As governor-general of Sudan, Gordon ended slavery and hanged Arab

slavers, including the son of the most famous of them, Sulayman ibn al-Zubayr Rahma al-Mansur, in the process. Zubayr had presented the khedive with the conquest of Darfur but was placed under house arrest in Cairo, where he had gone to press the government into granting him the governorship of the province. The Egyptians had entered into a war with Ethiopia, but two expeditions were repulsed. Gordon went on a mission to end the conflict but was captured and imprisoned by the Ethiopians. However, in 1879 Isma'il was forced to abdicate and was replaced by his son, Tawfiq, and Gordon resigned. Europeans held the idea that Gordon was a hero to the Sudanese, but many in Sudan were happy when he left.

Once Gordon was unemployed, King Leopold of Belgium tried unsuccessfully to hire him to run the Congo colony for him. Gordon went to Palestine still unemployed and once again Leopold tried to get him to go to the Congo, but the a rebellion led by the Mahdi broke out in Sudan in 1882, and Gordon was asked to return as the governor-general following the disaster of Colonel Hicks and the loss of an Egyptian army force of 10,000 men. Gordon's instructions were to evacuate European and Egyptian civilians from Sudan, and he was able to send some of them back, but the rebellion grew faster than it was possible to travel to Khartoum. Once Gordon was there, it was evident that the evacuation would not be possible, and he organized the defenses. In 1884, the garrison at Berber fell to the Mahdi and Khartoum was cut off from Cairo except by the occasional passing of messages through British outposts manned by Horatio Herbert Kitchener.



**General Charles “Chinese” Gordon (1833–1885) is shown in this 19th-century drawing being killed by “fanatical” followers of the Mahdi in January 1885, in Khartoum, Sudan. (Library of Congress)**

During the prolonged siege of Khartoum, Gordon maintained an air of calm that helped ease panic. He organized raids that brought in cattle, sheep, and grain and helped feed the city and the garrison. In London, British Prime Minister William Gladstone was a strong anti-imperialist and did not want to become embroiled in Sudan, but public opinion swung toward a rescue of Gordon, and eventually Gladstone allowed General Garnet Wolseley to command the Nile expedition for his relief. Wolseley was careful and planned meticulously to the last detail and in late 1884 set off to rescue Gordon. The advance was a “flying column” of cameleers who arrived in Metemma on January 20, 1885. In addition, Wolseley had river steamers armed with cannon to blast their way through the Mahdi’s forces, and they arrived within sight of Khartoum on

January 28, 1885. They arrived only days after the Mahdi's forces had stormed the town.

Gordon had already been killed and his head taken to the Mahdi. No one knows how he died, but dramatic paintings of his death have become iconic. With his cane in hand, he is shown being stabbed by a spear at the top of the stairs at the governor's residence. The Mahdi and Gordon had corresponded and sent each other gifts. The Mahdi had asked Gordon to join him and had sent a suit of patched clothes, the mark of his followers, to wear. Reportedly the Mahdi had ordered Gordon to be captured alive, but his followers had disobeyed this command. Gordon's death was the cause for Britain's 1898 reconquest of Sudan.

**See also:** [Baker, Samuel, and Baker, Florence; History of Southern Sudan; History of Sudan: Modern Period; Khartoum and Omdurman; White Nile River.](#)

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## GRANT, JAMES AUGUSTUS (1827–1892)

James Augustus Grant accompanied John Hanning Speke on his 1860 expedition to Lake Victoria to prove it was the source of the Nile. He was second to Speke and did not reprove his senior for not allowing him a greater share in the discovery. Grant's own book, *A Walk Across Africa*, dealt with the daily activities of the natives as well as the local flora. Until they reached the region now known as Rwanda, Grant was able to walk and continue with his companion, but then he came down with a severe infection, one that medical science has since been able to determine was a common malady in the Congo region, a *Mycobacterium ulcer*, which affects the skin and subcutaneous tissues.

Grant came down with the symptoms that were readily diagnosed by locals while the expedition was in the kingdom of Karague (or Karagwe). King Rumanika was well known and respected by Arab merchants at Kazeh (today's Tabora), but to reach him, Speke had to deal with a war, lack of men, and rapacious demands by local leaders who greatly depleted their store of goods for the great kings farther north. Illness plagued both Speke and Grant, and Grant was too ill to travel with Speke as he desperately looked for more porters. Without Grant, it was extremely hard for Speke to continue.

Eventually, the way was clear, and both men were able to proceed along the western shore of Lake Victoria. Here the kindness of King Rumanika overwhelmed the two, who had been treated thus far with vile contempt and robbed of whatever anyone could take from them. Speke asked if he could measure women of the court, who were force-fed a diet of milk and beef fat until they were so fat they could no longer walk and had to crawl on all four limbs (Jeal 2011, p. 142). He was allowed to measure the king's wife, who was nude. Word soon came that Mutesa I, the king of Buganda, wanted to fetch the two Europeans. Grant was struck down with a bad case of *Mycobacterial* ulcers that made it impossible for him to walk (Jeal 2011, p. 143). Grant was forced to stay and be treated for the disease and was not able to join Speke for another four months. Even though the two were together again, Grant's leg still had a painful



ulcer that had to be periodically lanced and drained of fetid fluid.

Speke spent his time in Mutesa's court being entertained by gifts of young women and bouts of *pombe* (a local beer), drinking with the king and his courtiers. In fact, Speke was ridiculed even by Samuel Baker about his love for women and beer that he proposed to build an inn at the spot where the Nile emerges from Lake Victoria, noting that it should be called Ripon Falls Hotel: "Speke and Mutesa, *pombe* and *mbugus* always ready" (Moorehead 2000, p. 71). When the two men left Buganda, they headed toward Bunyoro. Although King Kumrasi gave them an audience, he refused to let them pass through his country, and they had to bypass an important part of the river, further weakening their claims to discovery. Grant remained more reserved than Speke and did not indulge in local entertainment like his companion (Moorehead 2000, p. 71). Nonetheless, Grant never betrayed his companion and stood with him in the following debates over the accuracy of their claims. In fact, as it became clear to the Royal Geographical Society that Speke should not head the next mission back to central Africa, Grant was suggested as the better of the two men.

Grant would not be the person to settle the source of the Nile once and for all. He married Margaret Laurie in 1865 and was part of the British invasion of Ethiopia in 1867–68 under the command of Robert Napier. In the war, Grant served as an intelligence officer. After the war, he returned to his native Scotland, where continued to write on the botany of Africa and produced not only excellent summaries of the species but also drawings. He also helped with the identification of the botanical specimens brought back by Henry Morton Stanley. The dried specimens are preserved at Kew Gardens in London. He died in 1892 in his hometown of Nairn, Scotland (Carr 1901). His body is buried in London's St. Paul's Cathedral. His grave mentions his contributions to the study of African botany.

**See also:** [Baker, Samuel](#), and [Baker, Florence](#); [Buganda](#); [Bunyoro](#); [Mutesa I](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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# H

## **HAILE SELASSIE I (R. 1916–1974)**

Haile Selassie I, the last emperor of Ethiopia, brought his nation onto the world stage and into the 20th century. He modernized the country's political and social systems, withstood an invasion by Italy, and became an important African leader.

Tafari Makonnen (Haile Selassie), a cousin of Emperor Menelik II, was born in the southern province of Harar in 1892, where he received a modern education and later became governor. When Menelik's daughter Zawditu became empress in 1916, Tafari was chosen to be her regent and heir, receiving the title of *Ras*. Tafari soon took the lead in governmental affairs.

As regent, *Ras* Tafari embarked on modernization programs, including educational, political, and military reforms. He employed foreign experts, sent diplomatic missions to Europe, and gained Ethiopian membership into the League of Nations. A major triumph of his regency was a three-month tour of Europe in 1924 where he was received by many heads of state. In 1928, he was elevated to *Negus*, king of Ethiopia, and when Empress Zawditu died in 1930, Tafari took the throne as Haile Selassie I. His coronation received worldwide attention. In Jamaica, some people thought he was divine. His first actions as monarch were to consolidate his authority in the provinces and enact Ethiopia's first constitution in 1931, which created a parliament but gave the emperor absolute power.

The Italian invasion of 1935 seriously challenged Ethiopian independence. As the world looked the other way, Mussolini's army surged across Ethiopia, taking the capital, Addis Ababa, in May 1936. Selassie was forced to flee and took refuge in Britain. On June 30, 1936, Selassie addressed the League of Nations to promote the Ethiopian cause. The league did nothing. When Italy declared war on Britain during World War II and threatened Britain's African colonies, Britain came to Selassie's aid. While British forces attacked Italian positions in

the north and south, Selassie, with Sudanese and Ethiopian troops under Major Orde Wingate, advanced from Sudan. Selassie triumphantly entered Addis Ababa on May 4, 1941, ending the Italian occupation.

With his monarchy restored, Selassie began to rebuild the country. Economic and educational gains were made, and a new constitution provided for popular elections. Selassie enjoyed international prestige and played a major role in the creation of the Organization of African Unity (African Union), which is headquartered in Addis Ababa.

Progress, however, could not keep up with demand, and mounting discontent led to a coup attempt in 1960. Insurgencies broke out in Eritrea and the southern province of Bale. The aging emperor, whose focus was on foreign affairs, seemed out of touch with domestic problems. Unrest came to head in 1974 when a British documentary brought to light a severe famine in Tigray in the north that the government had allegedly covered up. Using the famine as propaganda against Selassie, a radical Marxist military junta led by Mengistu Haile Mariam deposed the emperor on September 12, 1974. He was imprisoned and died mysteriously 11 months later. His remains were found some years after under the junta headquarters. Finally, in 2000, Haile Selassie I was ceremoniously interred in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Addis Ababa.



**Haile Selassie (1892–1975) was the last emperor of Ethiopia and the last of the Solomonic line that ruled Ethiopia for centuries. (Library of Congress)**

**See also:** [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Menelik II](#); [Mengistu Haile Mariam](#); [Wingate, Orde](#).

*Geri Shaw*

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## HASAN AL-TURABI (1932–2016)

Hasan al-Turabi was born in 1932 in the northern town of Kassala in eastern Sudan. The son of a Sufi shaykh (spiritual guide), he was educated in Islamic schools. In 1951, he moved to Khartoum to study law. While a student at Khartoum University's law school, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood, a fundamentalist Islamist movement started in Egypt as a means of resistance against the British. He went on for higher education first in Britain and then in France, where he obtained his PhD at the Sorbonne. He became the ideologue behind Sudan's Islamic fundamentalists, beginning with the Islamic Charter Front. He developed a strong belief in Muslim principles of government that would serve as the base of later governments in Sudan.

When Ja'afar al-Numayri came to power in 1969, al-Turabi was imprisoned and then later exiled himself to Libya. During this time in the 1970s, he worked with al-Sadiq al-Mahdi and the Ummah Party, but later the two would fall out over enforcement of *shari'ah* (religious law) in Sudan. Al-Turabi took a hard-line approach, whereas al-Mahdi was less willing to require enforcement. When the al-Mahdi government was overthrown by General 'Umar al-Bashir, al-Turabi had his chance to fully establish Islamic rule in Sudan. In fact, al-Turabi's National Islamic Front was behind the coup (Collins 2008, pp. 170–171). As a spokesperson for his Islamic government, during the 1990s he was a sought-after speaker. On one of his tours in Canada in 1992, however, a Sudanese exile attacked him in the Ottawa airport.

The first decades of the al-Bashir government was the height of al-Turabi's power. He formed a friendship with Osama bin Ladin when bin Ladin needed to find refuge from Saudi authorities in 1991 (Cline n.d.) He also became the mentor for Ayman al-Zawahiri during Al Qaeda's stay in Sudan. Saudi pressure on the Sudanese government, however, forced the group and its members to

relocate to Afghanistan in 1995–96 following an attempt on the life of Egyptian president Husni Mubarak in 1995. The failed assassination of Mubarak in Ethiopia began the decline in al-Turabi's influence in Sudan. By 1996, Sudan's United Nations delegation and embassies abroad were forced to reduce their size as more and more officials were banned from international travel, and the Sudanese government was forced to withdraw support or prevent organizations such as Al Qaeda from having a home in Sudan. As Robert Collins notes, Sudan was willing to force bin Ladin and others to leave so the country could have improved relations with other Arab and Western countries (Collins 2008, p. 217).

After falling out with President al-Bashir in 1999, al-Turabi was in and out of prison five times on many different charges, including attempting to overthrow the government by the Justice and Equality Movement in 2008 (Collins 2008, pp. 287–288). He was in jail in 2011 and warning al-Bashir of popular people's uprisings such as the one in Tunisia in 2010–11. Al-Turabi died in March 2016 of an apparent heart attack while in the hospital.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Islam on the Nile](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#); [Sufism and Sufi Brotherhoods](#).

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## HISTORY OF EGYPT: ANCIENT

Egypt’s history was first divided into several major periods and dynasties by Manetho, a Greek-speaking priest, in the third-century BCE work, *Aegyptiaca*, a history of Egypt until his time in the Ptolemaic period. Until recent archeological discoveries, the organization and list of kings he provided was used by most historians and archeologists; in fact, many still do. However, recent archeology has pushed the history of Egypt back even further into the later Neolithic or New Stone Age (8800–4700 BCE).

## Predynastic Period

The ancient history of Egypt begins around 5300 years BCE with the growth of the Sahara desert and the migration of Saharan peoples into the better-watered oases and Nile River valley. Around 4000 BC, the first of the predynastic periods emerged called Naqada I or Amratian (from the names of the places where the first archeological evidence was found). This was marked by the growth of agricultural settlements with the cultivation of wheat and barley and the domestication of goats, sheep, cattle, and donkeys. In addition, pottery appeared, as did elaborately carved cosmetic palettes made of ceramic or mudstone and limestone war mace heads. The mace would become an important symbol in Egyptian art, with pharaohs frequently depicted as smiting their enemies with maces.

Naqada I ended around 3500 BCE with the rise of a more developed material culture called Naqada II or Gerzean (named for places where archeological evidence was first found), which lasted until around 3100 BCE with the rise of the first dynasty (designated Dynasty Zero) of a unified Egypt. Naqada II is marked by the final development of the Sahara, with limited settlement around permanent water sources and the development of burial practices, pottery, cloth, and tomb paintings that depict boats, houses, and fighting warriors. Cosmetic palettes became more elaborate, depicting beasts—real and imagined—hunts and even historical events such as the conquests of cities. Politically, rival kingdoms rose, and that based in Hierakonpolis became the most powerful one poised for the unification that occurred around 3100 BCE.

From around 3100 to 2868 BCE, Egypt was unified under the rule of the Thinite pharaohs. It is called the “Thinite period” because the political center of the state was based in the city of Thinis near the site of Abydos in Upper Egypt. It is a matter of debate if the Pharaoh Menes was the first pharaoh of a unified Egypt as mentioned by Manetho or whether it was actually Narmer. Menes remains a myth, but the existence of Narmer and his son Aha are supported by archeological evidence. Among the most important finds are the Narmer limestone mace head and a mudstone cosmetic palette showing him wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt and the red crown of Lower Egypt. These were found at Hierakonpolis (Tell Ahmar) in 1897. Nearly a century later, in 1985 at Abydos, a jar seal was found listing eight of the earliest pharaohs, with Narmer listed as the first followed by Aha. Although Narmer is depicted wearing the two crowns of both Upper and Lower Egypt, it is believed that his son Aha was the

first to rule a unified country; during his rule, the capital moved from Thinis to a newly founded capital, Memphis, on the border between Upper and Lower Egypt, some 20 kilometers or 12 miles southeast of modern Cairo. However, during the First Dynasty (3100–2890 BCE), pharaohs continued to be buried in Upper Egypt. The Second Dynasty (2890–2696) BCE) began the official change of focus from burials in Upper Egypt to a newly opened necropolis at Saqqarah. The pharaohs also began to add to their titles such as “He of Sedge and Bee,” a practice that would last until the end of the Ptolemaic era. The first two dynasties also began to set off the names of the pharaoh in a representation of the palace walls called a *serekh* surmounted by the image of the god Horus. This would develop into the better-known cartouche with the name inside an enveloping rope. The cartouche was introduced by the first pharaoh of the Fourth Dynasty, Sneferu (2613–2589).

## Old Kingdom

The First Dynasty began the first major period of Egyptian history called the Old Kingdom (2868–2181 BCE). The Old Kingdom is marked by the pyramids built at Saqqarah, Giza, Dahshur, and other sites along the western shore of the Nile River—40 pyramids from Abu Ruwash in the north to al-Lahun near Fayyum in the south by the time the last ones were erected in the Middle Kingdom. The stone structures built at Saqqarah were among the first major constructions in stone masonry ever built. Imhotep, the architect of the great step pyramid at Saqqarah built for Pharaoh Djoser (2667–2648), was later glorified as a deity. Imhotep and other architects and masons based their buildings on existing reed and wood structures, even making decorative elements in stone of such materials as bundles of tightly tied reeds and wooden roof beams. The Old Kingdom saw a great outpouring of art, including some of the most realistic depictions of people produced in ancient Egypt. For example, the wooden sculpture of the priest Ka'aper from the early Fifth Dynasty is so realistic that when workmen uncovered it in the 1860 excavations at Saqqarah, they named it *Shaykh al-Balad* because of its close resemblance to the head of their village.

### Pyramids

There are many pyramids in Egypt and Sudan, but the most famous are the three on the Giza plateau and the step pyramid at Saqqarah. Nonetheless, royal houses along the Nile built burial pyramids from the Third Dynasty (2649–2575 BCE) in Egypt until the collapse of the Kingdom of Meroe in Sudan in 350 CE. Pyramids began with the step pyramid at Saqqarah built for Pharaoh Djoser (died 2611 BCE). It was a furthering of the idea of the flat mastabah tombs developed in the early dynastic period. It was built in several stages in stone rather than mud brick, and subsequent pharaohs wanted to be immortalized the same way.

The idea of the pyramid grew from the importance of the mound of creation in Egyptian religion. Pyramids were topped by a pyramidion that used the name of the pharaoh as the name of the pyramid (they were all named) and included protective wedjet eyes. A large number of pyramidions are housed today in the Cairo Museum. Many pyramids were mud brick encased in a shining cover of limestone that caught the sunlight and made the pyramids seem to reflect the heavens. Other pyramids were built of stone, including the inner courses. Being an excellent source for cut stone, much of the outer layer of limestone have been removed over the millennia to build other structures.

Pepy I (2321–2287) of the Sixth Dynasty was the last of the great pharaohs of the Old Kingdom. He ruled a vigorous country that was economically stable and

militarily strong. He pursued a policy to subdue and colonize both Palestine and the Western Desert, where one of Egypt's major threats lived—the nomadic and seminomadic Berber tribes called the Tehenu and Rebu (whom the Greeks called Libu). He launched extensive trade relations both to the east with city-states in what is now Lebanon and south along the Horn of Africa to Punt (thought to be Somalia). Pepy II (2278–2184) was the last of the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom. His rule of 60 years was one of the longest in ancient Egypt, but he ruled over a kingdom in decline as local governors and nomarchs took over more of the administration. The rise of the nomarchs began under Pepy I who married sisters, both named Ankhenesmeria, daughters of Khui, the nomarch of Abydos. The sisters each produced a ruling pharaoh, the first Merenra (2287–2278) and the second Pepy II (2278–2184). Djau, Khui's son and the pharaoh's uncle, became the chief minister for Merenra and Pepy II. Djau administered the state, allowing the nomarchs a great degree of independence. With the death of Pepy II, the First Intermediate Period began.

### First Intermediate Period

The First Intermediate Period lasted from 2181 BCE and the collapse of the Sixth Dynasty until 2055 BCE when a unified Egypt was reestablished. The period was characterized by the rise of small states, with two in particular emerging as the strongest: the Ninth Dynasty based in Herakleopolis (modern Ihnasya al-Madinah) and the 11th Dynasty based in Thebes (in Upper Egypt). The political instability affected economic and social stability as well led to a decline in the arts and architecture of the period. The political instability caused rapid turnover of rulers—25 pharaohs in a 50-year period, for example—and the infiltration of “Asian” nomads, specifically Bedouin from Sinai and Palestine. While the rulers of Herakleopolis dealt with driving out the Bedouin who had taken over much of the delta, the rulers of Thebes embarked on expanding the areas under their control starting with Pharaoh Intef I (2125–2112 BCE) and his successor, Intef II (2112–2063 BCE). They were able to move down the Nile toward Asyut, where the local governor supported the Herakleopolis pharaoh. Mentuhotep II (2055–2004 BCE), the Theban pharaoh, eventually defeated the rival king and reunified Upper and Lower Egypt.

## Middle Kingdom

The Middle Kingdom period saw not only the reunification of Upper and Lower Egypt but also a curtailment of the power of local nomarchs. Egypt embarked on a strategy to better protect its borders from outside attack and built several massive forts along its frontiers. It also pushed up the Nile River into the area controlled by the people of what the ancient Egyptians called the Kush (Nubian). They built on the earlier colonial activities of the Old Kingdom, opening and exploiting gold and copper mines. The First Intermediate Period disrupted the contact, but under the Pharaohs Senusret I (1965–1920 BCE) and Senusret III (1874–1855 BCE), northern Nubia was annexed to Egypt as far south as the Second Cataract. There the great fort at Buhen was built on an Old Kingdom trading center. Senusret III (1874–1855 BCE) built 14 forts in the southern frontier area to better secure Egypt's presence and the supply of gold, copper, and slaves. Buhen would remain Egypt's center of power in Lower Nubia into the New Kingdom.

The founding pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom was Mentuhotep II (2055–2004 BCE) of the 11th Dynasty based in Thebes. Once Mentuhotep defeated the 10th Dynasty of Herakleopolis, he moved the capital of unified Egypt from Memphis to his own southern city of Thebes. He concentrated his policies on controlling trade from Kush and on security along the desert fringes. He annexed the oasis of al-Dakhlah, bringing its agricultural production to Egypt. He warred against the Tehenu and other nomadic and seminomadic tribes in the Western Desert as well as against the Bedouin in Sinai.

In 1991 BCE, Amenemhat I (1991–1962 BCE), the chief minister of Mentuhotep III (1998–1991 BCE), came to power as the first pharaoh of the 12th Dynasty. He moved the capital from Thebes to Itjtawy (near modern al-Lisht) on the edge of Fayyum oasis. Amenemhat was followed by his son, Senusret I (1971–1926 BCE), after a palace coup against the father. Senusret I had been co-ruler with his father since he was 10 years old and was already a capable ruler. The story of the attempted coup and the subsequent events were entailed in a brilliant propaganda story called *The Tale of Sinuhe* that helped prop up the new 12th Dynasty's claim to legitimacy. *The Tale of Sinuhe* became one of the most widely read pieces of literature from ancient Egypt and inspired the modern novel *The Egyptian* by Finnish author Mika Waltari (published 1945), which was made into a Hollywood film in 1954 (although set much later in the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom).

Senusret I expanded Egypt's conquests in Nubia as far south as the Third Cataract in modern Sudan. He improved Egypt's trade relations with the city-states of Syro-Palestine and developed the gold and stone mines within his own territories. He glorified his reign by patronizing the arts, including literature, and built the White Chapel at the Temple of Amun in Karnak, restored the Temple of Ra in Heliopolis, and revived pyramids for his own tomb at al-Lisht.

Perhaps the greatest of the Middle Kingdom pharaohs was Senusret III (1874–1855 BCE). He was an able general as well as competent administrator. He ruled for only 19 years, but the country enjoyed one of its greatest periods of prosperity during that time. He conquered Lower Nubia and built the great forts of Buhen and Semna to protect Egypt from Kush and other peoples in Sudan. He crushed the nomarchs to prevent them from threatening the monarchy from within. He both reformed provincial government and replaced the hereditary governors with his appointees. He divided the country into Lower, Upper, and Nubian Egypt, choosing a minister of state for each. The ministers were responsible to him, which reduced the power of the nobility and increased the power of middle-class administrators. He opened up greater trade relations not only with the states of Syro-Palestine but also with Crete. He restored or expanded temples at Medamud, Karnak, and Abydos. He chose Dahshur, just south of Saqqarah, as the site for his pyramid just as it had been the site for other Middle Kingdom pyramids (Amenemhat II and III) among those of the Old Kingdom.

The greatness of the Middle Kingdom ends with the last of the pharaohs of the 12th Dynasty, Queen Sobeknefru (1799–1795 BCE). She had been the daughter of Amenemhat III (1844–1797 BCE) and wife of Amenemhat IV (1799–1787 BCE). She assumed the full mantle of authority as pharaoh, holding it until her death. Having no sons to follow her, the 12th Dynasty fell, and the subsequent 13th and 14th Dynasties ruled for 445 years in a climate of steady decline.



## Second Intermediate Period

Two rival dynasties emerged in the slow decline of the Middle Kingdom, the 13th in Upper Egypt and the 14th in the Nile River delta. The 14th was destroyed by the invasion of the “Asian” Hyksos. The Hyksos (meaning “rulers of foreign lands”—*heka khaswt* in ancient Egyptian) had a major technological advantage over the Egyptians—the horse and war chariot, both of which were unknown to the Egyptians. They also introduced the composite bow and better bronze-making techniques. By 1650 BCE, the Hyksos took control over the entire delta region and established themselves as the 15th Dynasty. A conflict within the Hyksos produced another rival dynasty, the 16th, although it ruled over only a small part of the delta. The main Hyksos capital was at Avaris (modern Tell al-Dab‘a) in the eastern delta. The Hyksos were able to penetrate into Middle Egypt before the armies of Thebes were able to halt their advance. The Hyksos pharaohs began negotiations with the leaders of Kermah (Sudanese Nubia) so they might crush the Thebans between them. The Hyksos then asked the Thebans to stop their yearly hippopotamus hunts because the animal was the incarnation of the Hyksos god Seth. The Thebans refused and began the final war. This is embodied in the ancient Egyptian tale of *The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre*‘ (Seqenenre‘ being the father of both Kamose and Ahmose).

Fortunately for the Upper Egyptians, a great leader emerged when needed. Kamose (1555–1550 BCE) fought against Kermah in the south and pushed the Hyksos back to their capital in the delta. However, Kamose was most likely killed in battle (his mummy shows a severe head wound), and his younger brother, Ahmose I (1550–1525 BCE), took over and completed the task of conquering Avaris and pushing out the Hyksos.

## The New Kingdom

Ahmose I founded the 18th Dynasty in 1550 BCE by reunifying Egypt and keeping Thebes as the capital. The New Kingdom produced three great dynasties: the 18th, 19th, and 20th. The 18th Dynasty produced one of the best known female pharaohs, Hatshepsut (1479–1458 BCE), as well as Thutmose III (1479–1425) and Amenophis IV or Akhenaten (1351–1334 BCE). In the confusion after attempted religious reforms by Akhenaten, the boy king Tutankhamun ruled briefly from 1333 to 1323 BCE. Akhenaten had tried to replace the old gods with the sun god Aten, but the priesthood stood its ground and opposed the reforms. The army general Horemheb supported the priesthood and, after the death of Pharaoh Ay (1323–1318 BCE), took control as the next pharaoh (1292–1250 BCE) and the last of the 18th Dynasty rulers.



The Egyptian–Hittite peace treaty (Treaty of Qadesh) which was concluded between Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II and Hittite King Hattusili III. According to most Egyptologists, it was concluded in or around 1259 BCE, marking the official end of negotiations, and Ramesses II's acceptance from Hittite diplomats of a silver tablet on which the terms were inscribed. (tunart/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

With Horemheb's death, his general Parameses took over and ruled as Ramesses I (1292–1290 BCE), founder of the 19th Dynasty. The greatest of this dynasty's rulers was Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE), who is commonly called Ramesses the Great. He ruled for 66 years, exerting the strength of Egypt politically and economically. His expansion into the Middle East brought him into direct conflict with the Hittite Kingdom of northern Anatolia, and in 1274 BCE the two armies met in battle at Qadesh in Syria (near modern Homs). Although Ramesses claimed victory, the battle seems to have been a draw, leading to the first major international treaty to be concluded between the two powers in 1259 BCE.

The 20th Dynasty's Ramesses III (1184–1153 BCE) had to repel the invasion by the Sea Peoples from the north. Ramesses did not wait for them to reach Egypt but quickly organized his army to face them at Gaza. There the highly disciplined Egyptian forces defeated and stopped the march of the Sea Peoples on land and at sea. Ramesses III was also able to hold back attacks by the Rebu, but following his death, the economics of the kingdom declined and it slowly slipped into the Third Intermediate Period.

### Third Intermediate Period

The Third Intermediate Period began with an internal conflict between the viceroy of Kush and the high priest of Thebes. The Theban faction moved north to Tanis (modern San al-Hajar) in the Nile River delta and became known as the 21st Dynasty. The Libyan ruler Shoshenq I (946–925 BCE) founded the rival 22nd Dynasty. He established his capital in Bubastis (modern Tell Basta) and eventually became the greater of the rival pharaohs who was able to reestablish Egyptian power. He married the daughter of the rival pharaoh, Psusennes II (959–945 BCE), appointed his son as governor of Upper Egypt, launched campaigns into Asia, sacked Jerusalem, and brought in wealth from tribute and trade.

Under Shoshenq III, however, the state began to dissolve once again, with local commanders able to ignore central government demands. The 25th Dynasty from Kush under the able Pharaoh Piye (746–715 BCE) was briefly able to bring about stability. They continued to rule from Napata in Nubia (modern Sudan). The greatest of these Kushite pharaohs was Taharqa (690–664 BCE), who left several major monuments as proof of his rule in the Temple of Karnak.

### The Late Period

In 664 BCE, an Egyptian rival was established in the Nile delta city of Sais called the 26th Dynasty. The Saite period lasted from 664 to 525 BCE and was the last indigenous dynasty of the ancient period. It was a period of renaissance in art, and close relations were developed with the Greeks, who were employed as mercenaries. Herodotus (490–420 BCE) traveled to Egypt and claims to have reached as far south as Elephantine (modern Aswan) and devoted the second volume of his *Histories* to stories of the pharaohs. However, by the time of his visit, Egypt was a province of the Persian Empire with its conquest in 525 BCE and would remain so until 404 BCE when Egyptians would again rise in revolt. The 28th, 29th, and 30th dynasties ruled from 405 BCE until 342 BCE when Persia again conquered the country only to lose it in 332 BCE to Alexander the Great.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Aswan](#); [Egyptology](#); [Fayyum](#); [History of Sudan](#); [Ancient Kush and Nubia](#); [Luxor](#).

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## HISTORY OF EGYPT: ISLAMIC PERIOD

The Islamic history of Egypt begins in 639 when the first Muslim Arab army arrived. Led by ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, the army did not attack Alexandria with its well-provisioned garrison and fleet but decided to move south to the garrison at Babylon near modern Cairo. ‘Amr was more comfortable there and able to use open fields for cavalry maneuvers or to retreat to Palestine if he failed. By 641, Egypt was fully under Muslim Arab rule. ‘Amr moved the provincial capital from Alexandria, which was vulnerable to attack from the sea, to his newly built military camp al-Fustat near the ancient capital of Memphis. From al-Fustat, the Arabs launched campaigns down the river toward Nubia and into North Africa.

## Early Period

In the early Islamic period, Egypt was the center for the vast territories in North Africa and Spain ruled by the *khalifah* (caliphate) based in Damascus (the Umayyads 661–750). Egypt was the most populous and richest of the African and European domains of the new *khalifah*. Between 641 and 642, the Mosque of ‘Amr was built large enough to hold the whole army for communal Friday prayers. There was little interest in converting the tax-paying Copts until the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (685–705). ‘Abd al-Malik gave the new empire an Arab face, changing the language of government to Arabic and replacing the older Greek and Persian. He was considered a strong Muslim and encouraged conversion to Islam. Unfortunately for the Umayyads, the Arab-dominated military did not want to enlist newly converted Muslims, and the *Mawali*, as they were called, were discriminated against in pay. Many of the new converts were forced to continue to pay the poll tax imposed on non-Muslims, which caused discontent. These issues resulted in social revolution against the Umayyads led by their cousins, the ‘Abbasids. In 750, the ‘Abbasids and their Persian army defeated the Umayyads and their Syrian army at the Battle of Zab in Iraq. The Umayyad family was destroyed, and only one young prince escaped, ‘Abd al-Rahman, who made his way to Spain. In 756, ‘Abd al-Rahman established a rival *imarah* (emirate) that would rival the cultural developments of the Islamic heartland.

Egypt was more or less out of these events, with the majority of its people remaining Coptic. Arabs were encouraged to migrate to Egypt and allowed to intermarry as a policy of Arabicizing the Egyptian people, contrary to the usual policy of not allowing Arabs to displace the original populations of the empire. Following ‘Amr, 98 governors held the post (average tenure two years per governor). Egypt’s people were severely oppressed by some governors and well treated by others. There were several popular revolts, some by Arabs and Arabicized (Islamicized) Egyptians and others by Copts. Each Coptic rebellion ended with more Copts converting to Islam as a means of escaping the taxation levied on non-Muslims.

With the end of the Umayyads in 750, the ‘Abbasids were even more abusive of their subjects. Egypt continued to suffer until the ‘Abbasids decided to allow their Turkish military commander, Ahmad ibn Tulun (868–884), to take Egypt as an *iqta* or a military tenure or tax farm. Ahmad brought a period of prosperity to the province and made it semi-independent. He decided to build his military

base just to the north of al-Fustat, which he called *al-Qita'i* (wards). He also built one of the most distinctive Islamic monuments in Egypt, the Ibn Tulun Mosque (between 876 and 884) using either Iraqi artisans or Egyptians trained by Iraqi master craftsmen in imitation of the Great Mosque at Samarra, which was then the 'Abbasid capital. The minaret seems to be a miniature of the ancient Iraqi ziggurat.

The Tulunids (Ahmad and his four successors) expanded their rule into Syria, occupying most of it in 878. Ahmad improved Egypt's infrastructure, especially the irrigation system, to improve production. He raised an enormous amount of money for the state treasury but reduced the yearly tribute to Baghdad. To maintain good relations with the 'Abbasids, Ahmad's successor, Khamarawayh (884–895) married his daughter to *Khalifah* Mu'tadid (892–902) in 895. Following Khamarawayh, the next three Tulunids fell under the control of their own military men, a mix of Turkish and Sudanese. Eventually, in a period of renewed 'Abbasid strength, the Tulunids were defeated in 905. The 'Abbasid army considered Egypt to be a conquered country, and the population suffered from pillage and ruin. The Tulunid capital was totally destroyed, leaving only a single mosque. The succeeding governors appointed from Baghdad tended to be mostly Turkish, and in 935 Muhammad ibn Tughj al-Ikhshid was sent as governor.

Muhammad ibn Tughj had been governor of Syria before being appointed to Egypt. He was able to gain considerable independence from Baghdad and once again brought a period of prosperity to Egypt. The Ikhshidid Dynasty ruled over not only Egypt but also Syria and the Hejaz, including the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Although their appointment was confirmed by Baghdad, the *Khalifa*' (Caliphs) had lost power to a military oligarchy that controlled provinces as more or less independent states. The Ikhshidids remained in power until the last ruler, who was actually a black eunuch, Abu al-Misk Kafur, who ruled for 22 years. His rule saw a long period of reduced Nile floods that caused widespread famine and also saw a devastating earthquake. Nonetheless, he maintained a lavish court that attracted poets and literati, and he built massive public works. By the time of his death in 968, most of Egypt had converted to Islam, and Arab immigrants had intermarried with locals to the point that Arabic was the majority language. Most of the rural population suffered from high taxation that paid for the luxury of his court. Only merchants benefited from the international trade the Ikhshidids encouraged.



In 969, Egypt fell to the Fatamids, a Shi'a (Isma'ili or Sevener) dynasty that emerged first in 909 in eastern Algeria among the Berbers. The Fatamids challenged the Sunni 'Abbasids in Iraq and Umayyads in Spain. In response, in 929 'Abd al-Rahman III of Spain declared himself to be the Umayyad (Sunni) *khalifah* in opposition to the 'Abbasid al-Radi (also Sunni) and Fatamid al-Qa'im (Isama'ili Shi'ite). All three claimed legitimacy, but the Fatamids and their social revolution of inclusiveness of all Muslims, no matter their ethnicity or language, was greatly appealing to the Berbers in North Africa.

When Kafur died in 968, Egypt again suffered from famine and a plague that killed hundreds of thousands. Egypt was in turmoil and ripe for conquest. Fatamid *Khalifah* al-Mu'izz (953–975) carefully planned the invasion, digging wells and distributing money to his troops along the route to be sure his army would arrive in Egypt ready for battle. He placed his troops under the command of Jawhar al-Siqili ("the Sicilian"), and in 969 the Egyptian capital, al-Fustat, was taken. The Fatamids built a royal city (greater than a royal residence) north of al-Qata'i which they called *al-Qahirah* ("The Victorious" in honor of the planet Mars or *al-Qahir*). Al-Mu'izz moved the capital from Tunisia to Egypt and in 970 laid the foundations for the great mosque named for the daughter of the Prophet, Fatimah al-Zahra. The al-Azhar mosque would soon rival the main Sunni mosques as a place for religious learning. From al-Qahirah (Cairo), the Fatamids expanded their control to the east, eventually taking all of Palestine, Lebanon, and the Hejaz and its two holy cities.

The Fatamids quickly made peace with their Egyptian subjects, and, though it is not likely many Egyptians abandoned their Sunni beliefs, the Fatamids proved to be tolerant rulers and did not force their Sunni subjects to accept Shi'ism. Egypt quickly recovered its economic strength. Al-Mu'izz was succeeded by his son al-'Aziz (975–996), who brought in Turkish and Sudanese troops to offset the dependence on Berbers from Algeria and Tunisia. Al-'Aziz was able to maintain a balance between the three ethnicities in his army, but his son, al-Hakim (996–1021), used the Sudanese to enforce his many and often contradictory orders. He set off a conflict between the three segments that ultimately forced the Turks and Berbers to unite against the Sudanese, leaving the Sudanese at the mercy of the others no matter what al-Hakim wanted. Al-Hakim, it is believed, had a Coptic mother and his advisers were frequently Copts. Al-Hakim often became angry with his advisers and confiscated their

wealth. This was such a common practice that he set up a special office to assist with the confiscations.

Al-Hakim's occasional anti-Christian episodes included tearing down the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem when he demanded to know how the "miracle of the candles" was performed. At Easter, the lights were put out and, with the lighting of a single candle held by a priest, all the torches in the church were relit as if by a miracle. On being told there was a channel filled with oil that connected all of the torches, he had the church torn down to demonstrate that the "miracle" was a hoax. The destruction of the church helped provoke the First Crusade.

Al-Hakim's lasting legacy is the Druze religion named for one of his most loyal followers, Muhammad bin Ismail Nashtakin al-Darazi. Al-Darazi was a Persian who came to Egypt to serve the Fatamid court. He promoted the Fatamid *khalifah* as the incarnation of the godhead. Shortly after, the people of al-Fustat openly mocked the idea and, in response to an edict that banned women from being in the streets, the people hanged an effigy of a woman. Al-Hakim ordered his Sudanese troops to burn down the city, which they did. Angry local people, backed by the Turkish troops and angered over the godhead claim, besieged al-Hakim in his palace and demanded the head of al-Darazi. Al-Hakim calmly told his people that al-Darazi was not in the palace and had fled to Lebanon. Al-Hakim's erratic rule continued. Eventually, in 1021, he seemed to disappear. It is assumed that his sister, tired of his erratic behavior, had him poisoned, although no body was ever found. For his loyal followers, he did not disappear but had gone into suspended occultation like the 12th Imam, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi al-Muntazir (866–872) before him.

Fatamid power and prosperity reached its height under Abu Tamim Ma'add al-Mustansir Billah (1036–1094). Despite this, the Fatamids lost control of Tunisia, but in revenge al-Mustansir sent the Bedouin tribes, the Bani Hilal and Bani Sulaym, to devastate the Tunisian countryside. In 1071, he lost Sicily to the Normans, and in Syria the Fatamids engaged in warfare with a rival Byzantine state and the Shi'ite Buyids and then the Sunni Saljuqs. Despite all this, Egypt remained stable and prosperous. The conflict in Syria was unable to come to a definitive conclusion because of the arrival of the Western Crusaders who took Fatamid Jerusalem in 1099 (which had recently been retaken by the Fatamids from the Saljuqs). The border between Fatamid Egypt and the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was the city of Gaza, with the Sinai Peninsula and even a bit of the southern Negev (Naqab) desert in Egyptian hands.

As the Fatamid Dynasty began to decline, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Turkish Atabeks grew in military and economic power. In Syria, the Atabek ‘Imad al-Din Zangi of Mosul conquered the Latin state, Edessa, in 1144. ‘Imad al-Din’s successor was Nur al-Din, who ruled Aleppo and in 1156 added Damascus to his kingdom. Nur al-Din (1146–1174) became involved in a dispute between rival Fatamid *wazirs* (chief ministers) along with the Latin king of Jerusalem, Amalric I (1163–1174). Each supported a different claimant, and Nur al-Din sent his able lieutenant, Shirkuh, to Egypt. Shirkuk was Kurdish and brought to Egypt his nephew, Salah al-Din, to assist him. During the conflict, the candidate backed by Amalric was assassinated, and Fatamid *Khalifah* al-‘Adid (1160–1171) lost control of Egypt to the agents of Nur al-Din. Salah al-Din developed a close relationship with al-‘Adid and was highly sympathetic to him. Although in reality the new lord of Egypt was Nur al-Din Zangi, Salah al-Din maintained the fiction of al-‘Adid’s rule until al-‘Adid’s death in 1171. Nur al-Din died shortly after leaving his unified country of Syria and Egypt to numerous claimants in 1174. Salah al-Din had to establish his rule in Syria against Zangids in Aleppo and Mosul. Salah al-Din took all of Syria and forced the Zangids of Mosul to sign peace treaties.

The Ayyubids, as the dynasty founded by Salah al-Din (1169–1193) was called, recognized the ‘Abbasid *khalifah* as the spiritual leader of the Sunni world and organized peace with the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The peace was broken by the ambitious Renaud de Châtillon, and Salah al-Din destroyed the Latin army at the Horns of Hattin in 1187. Salah al-Din and his forces quickly took most of the main cities in Palestine and Lebanon, with only Tyre and Acre holding out. The loss of most of the Latin Kingdom, including the capital of Jerusalem, provoked the Third Crusade, which accomplished little. A new peace was signed that agreed to allow Christian pilgrims to visit the sites under Muslim control, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem was restored to the port city of Acre.

Following the death of Salah al-Din in 1193, the kingdom was broken up between his brothers and sons. Egypt fell to his able brother, Safa al-Din al-‘Adil I, while his sons divided Syria and other lands between them. Egypt prospered under the Ayyubids, who introduced the madrasah system to the country. The madrasah was first introduced by the Sunni Saljuqs to counter the appeal of the Isma‘ilis. They were places where Sunni Islam was taught and quickly became the main source for an educated class to administer the various Muslim kingdoms. In Egypt, the majority of the people had remained Sunni, with most belonging to the Shafa‘i school of jurisprudence (*madhhab*). The Kurdish

Ayyubids introduced the Hanafī school, and the madrasahs they opened taught Hanafī law. Eventually, all four Sunni schools were taught in the Egyptian madrasahs.

Salah al-Din spent little time in Egypt during his reign, and the Fatamid palaces were allowed to fall into ruin. Salah al-Din and the Ayyubids moved to a spur of the Muqattam Hills east of Cairo, where they built a citadel. The Ayyubids continued to support the arts and built many important public works, fountains, mosques, and especially madrasahs. They also revived infrastructure such as irrigation canals. Among the most important was reopening the Bahr al-Yusuf canal that linked the Nile River to the Fayyum Oasis. Since that time, it has been named after Salah al-Din's second name, Yusuf.

In 1217, the Fifth Crusade was launched against Ayyubid Egypt. The Crusaders were soundly defeated. The German Emperor Frederick II (named King of Sicily in 1198 and Holy Roman Emperor in 1212) was blamed for the defeat because of the delays in the arrival of his troops. Frederick married Yolanda of Jerusalem in 1225, making him father-in-law to the claimant to the Kingdom of Jerusalem. In 1228, Frederick launched the Sixth Crusade (1228–1229), which again attacked Egypt. The Crusader army took the city of Damietta but was defeated in the Nile River delta. They held Damietta (modern al-Dumyat) and used it as a bargaining chip in negotiations with al-Kamil (also known as Meledin). In exchange for Damietta, al-Kamil released the captured Crusaders, returned Jerusalem to Christian rule as part of a 10-year truce, and promised to return the relic of the true Holy Cross (although he did not have it). Frederick was crowned King of Jerusalem in 1229, but his right to the title was disputed in Europe, and Pope Gregory IX had already excommunicated him. At the end of the 10 years, Jerusalem returned to Muslim control partially because the pope, angry with Frederick II, did not want to ratify the truce. During the negotiations, al-Kamil allowed St. Francis of Assisi to visit him and even try to convert him to Christianity. It is reported that al-Kamil respected St. Francis as a sincere believer but was amused at his attempts to convert him.

Egypt was attacked again by the Seventh Crusade (1248–1254), which was led by the French King Louis IX or St. Louis (1226–1270). The Ayyubids of Egypt were in decline, and their Turkish and Mongol slave troops (Mamalik) were on the rise. The last of the Ayyubids to rule undisputed was al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub (1249–1250), who organized the defense of Egypt from the Crusaders but died on campaign at al-Mansurah, a major defeat for the Crusader army. At the Battle of al-Mansurah, several important Turkish commanders were

key to the Crusader defeat, including 'Izz al-Din Aybak, Baybars al-Bunduqdari, and Sayf al-Din Qalawun. The Ayubid heir, Turanshah, was in Syria at the time and in order for the army to not lose heart against the Crusaders, his able wife, Shajarat al-Durr kept al-Salih's death a secret and ruled in his stead. Once Turanshah was back in Egypt, his mother and the generals announced the death of his father and installed Turanshah as the next sultan. Turanshah quickly lost the support of his generals and was overthrown in a military coup that placed his mother, Shajarat al-Durr on the throne in 1250. Forced to take a husband to protect her infant son, she chose the Mamluk commander 'Izz al-Din Aybak in 1250. The crusade ended in failure with the near total loss of the Crusader army and the capture of the rest, including King Louis IX, who, along with the few remaining members of the French knights, was ransomed for 800,000 gold coins.

## The Bahri and Burji Mamalik

The Seventh Crusade helped force a change in Egyptian government from the Ayyubids to the Mamalik (plural of Mamluk), or slave soldier regimes. The Mamalik are divided into two main “dynasties,” although few sultans inherited father to son. The first of these were the Bahri Mamalik, who were named for their barracks on the island of Rawdah at Cairo. The Bahri were mainly Mongol or Turkish-origin slaves purchased as children. Although slaves, they were given military education, taught Arabic, and were freed once they reached manhood. They typically remained fiercely loyal to their commanders (*amirs*). The Bahri ruled from 1250 to 1389. The second dynasty was the Burji named for the citadel first built by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. By the time the Bahri Dynasty turned over rule to the Burji Mamalik, the Mongol states in Iran and Central Asia closed off the market for boys from that region, and the market moved to the Caucasus, where mainly Circassian boys were purchased.

Hülegü Khan, brother to the better known Kublai Khan, was sent to conquer Iran and Iraq, and in 1258 he took Baghdad and killed *Khalifah* al-Must‘asim (1242–1258). The ‘Abbasid family survived, with some of them fleeing to Egypt, where the Mamalik installed al-Mustansir as the next *khalifah* in 1261. In 1260, Hülegü sent his lieutenant, Kitbuga, west to bring Egypt under Mongol rule. Sultan Qutuz collected his *amirs* and their Mamalik and marched into Palestine, first making sure the tiny Latin Kingdom based in Acre stayed out of the battle, and then marched his army to ‘Ayn Jalut. The Battle of ‘Ayn Jalut ended in a heavy defeat of the Mongols. Qutuz allowed the Mamluk *amir* (commander) Baybars to take control of the army during the battle because he knew the area well. On the way back to Cairo, however, Baybars instigated a coup that overthrew Qutuz. Following the Mongol defeat and their withdrawal, Baybars and his army moved into Syria, taking most of it for the Mamalik, including some of the few remaining Crusader forts.

Egypt was neither politically nor economically stable during the 267 years of Mamluk rule, and there were 56 sultans with an average of only 4.7 years per ruler. Egypt suffered under rapacious rulers who spent much of their income on building monuments to glorify themselves. The country suffered famines, plagues, and earthquakes. The bubonic plague of 1348 not only depopulated average citizens but also killed thousands of Mamalik. Nonetheless, the Mamalik remained a strong military force, defeating and turning back three attempted Mongol invasions. Although they were among the first to use firearms against

the Mongols, they discarded them, considering them to be “unmanly” and “dishonorable.” The Mamalik remained formidable foes on the battlefield, feared and respected by their neighbors. They concentrated on cavalry, and were the finest cavalry force of their era being both highly trained and well disciplined. They finally put an end to the Crusader state, clinging to the port cities of Acre, Tyre, and Tartus.

## The Ottomans

The Ottomans defeated the Mamalik twice, at Marj Dabiq in Syria in 1516 and Radaniyah near Cairo in 1517. The Ottoman victories were assisted by the Mamluk *amir* Khayr Bey, who was the governor of Damascus. The Ottoman sultan, Salim I Yavuz (1512–1520), took back to Istanbul not only a massive amount of Muslim holy relics as booty, but also the last member of the ‘Abbasid family, al-Mutawakkil III (1508–1516, 1517), who signed over the title of *khalifah* to the Ottoman ruler. The Ottomans left the Mamalik in control of Egypt and extracted taxes. The local Mamalik were allowed to keep the lands they controlled as *iqta‘a* (tax farms) granted by the sultan in Istanbul. Egypt was divided into separate provinces by Sulayman I (1520–1566) by decree in 1524. An Ottoman appointee was placed at the head of each province, including those in Upper Egypt that were administered by tribal shaykhs. The tribal authorities remained until 1576 when the last of these areas finally fell to Ottoman authority. The regions were under a *Wali* (viceroy) who controlled the whole country but had no authority over the military. The military remained under the command of its own officers and was involved in several rebellions over pay. Following the rebellion in 1609, the local Mamalik were able to gain control of several offices, including the one responsible for the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca and the financial administration.

The *Wali* gained greater power by playing different Mamluk factions against each other, but the Ottoman Janissary regiments, elite infantry troops, were able to gain strength by making an alliance with urban craft guilds that protected them from government abuse in return for a 10-percent fee charged on the sales of items. In turn, conflict between Janissary regiments allowed the Mamalik to rise once again, and a system of beys ruled Egypt until Napoleon’s invasion in 1789.

Napoleon’s 1789 invasion had several important effects on the country. For Egyptians, this was the first time a European army was able to defeat the Muslims in Egypt. Napoleon tried to convince the Egyptians he came as a liberator from the abuses of the Mamalik. He even tried to act as a Muslim and wear local clothes, but most Egyptians refused to see him and his army as anything more than an occupying foreign power. For Europeans, this was the first time scientists had the time to study the country; as a result, Egyptology was born. When Napoleon was forced out of Egypt, it gave the opportunity for an ambitious Ottoman officer, Muhammad ‘Ali, to rise to power.



## Modern Egypt

Modern Egypt began with the rise of Muhammad ‘Ali (1805–1848). He had observed the French and British armies and, once he was in control of the country, set about building a modern trained and equipped army. He effectively ended the Mamalik by killing many of them by 1811, and his control of Egypt was recognized by the Ottoman sultan. To end dependence on foreign military equipment, he embarked on an industrialization policy so that Egypt manufactured its own equipment. He built a modern navy and built the barrage dam north of Cairo to improve irrigation for better agricultural production. He introduced the recruitment of Egyptian peasants in the army and opened up officer training schools to all boys, not just sons of the elite. In 1811, Muhammad ‘Ali was asked to assist the Ottoman sultan in the Arabian Peninsula against the fundamentalist Wahhabis. He also assisted the Ottomans against the Greeks in 1824–1828 and launched his own invasions of Sudan in 1820 and Syria in 1831. Muhammad ‘Ali’s army was able to invade Anatolia and defeat Sultan Mahmud II. In 1833, alarmed at the power of Egypt, the European powers forced Muhammad ‘Ali to sign a treaty with the sultan that gave Egypt to Muhammad ‘Ali’s family.

Muhammad ‘Ali’s son Ibrahim convinced his father to give more positions to Egyptians and to depend on them as being more loyal subjects than Turks. Starting in the 1820s, Muhammad ‘Ali also sent missions of young Egyptians to Europe, mainly to France, for education and to return to teach others. By the time Muhammad ‘Ali died in 1849, he had “reinvented” Egypt. Although Egypt technically remained part of the Ottoman Empire, he was able to act as the leader of an independent country.

When his successor, Ibrahim Pasha, died in 1848 of tuberculosis, Muhammad ‘Ali’s grandson, ‘Abbas I (1848–1854), took over. ‘Abbas was assassinated by two of his slaves and was succeeded by his uncle, Sa‘id Pasha (1854–1863). Sa‘id was friends with the French consul, Ferdinand de Lesseps, who pushed him to authorize digging the Suez Canal. Sa‘id did not seek permission of the Ottoman sultan and began the canal using more than 100,000 Egyptian workers taken from their farms. Permission from the sultan came after the canal was nearly half finished at the urging of de Lesseps’ cousin, the French Empress Eugénie. The corruption around the company and the arbitration by France’s Napoleon III, was scandalous, but the Egyptians had no choice but to go deeply in debt. The canal was opened in 1869 by the Khedive Isma‘il (1863–1879) with

grand fanfare and several European heads of state attending.

Isma‘il was succeeded by Tawfiq (1879–1892), who put the country deeply into debt in his attempts to modernize the country. Tensions in the Egyptian army erupted in 1882 when non-Turkish or Circassian officers under Ahmad ‘Urabi revolted. The Egyptians were tired of being overlooked for promotions and forced Tawfiq to dismiss many older officers. The revolt spread to average citizens, who took out their anger on the foreigners in Alexandria. In response, the British fleet bombarded Alexandria and landed troops. Later that year, the British and Egyptian forces fought the Battle of Tell al-Kabir, which the British won. As a result of Egypt’s financial crisis, the British took control of the country, with particular emphasis on securing the Suez Canal.

British interference was greatly resented by all Egyptians and the British administrator, Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer (1883–1907), was greatly hated. The British reestablished Egypt’s financial credibility and also ran the police and the army. In response, Egyptian nationalism grew stronger and even members of the royal family became anti-British. When World War I broke out in 1914, pro-Turkish Khedive ‘Abbas II Hilmi (1892–1914) was replaced by the British with his more malleable uncle, Husayn Kamil (1914–1917). The British detached Egypt from Turkey and declared it an independent sultanate. When Husayn Kamil died, his son, Kamal al-Din, refused to throne as long as the British were still in Egypt. Instead, the throne went to one of Husayn Kamil’s younger brothers, Ahmad Fu’ad (1917–1936).

Ahmad Fu’ad I was greatly influenced by Italian tutors and never learned to speak Arabic well, but he was fully comfortable in Italian and Turkish. His Italian tastes were tolerated by the British as long as Italy was an ally. Fu’ad was not a strong nationalist in the troubled times after World War I that erupted into the Egyptian Uprising of 1919 when the national delegation to the peace conference in Paris was refused a seat. The British and French misjudged the level of Arabs’ nationalism and dismissed their demands. In the end, the British were forced in 1922 to recognize Egypt as independent and Fu’ad as king of Egypt.

Fu’ad’s son Faruq (r. 1936–1952) at first also had Italian tutors, but the British became concerned when Italy turned toward fascism in the early 1920s. Italy was still involved in this conquest of Libya, and the Libyan leader, Idriss al-Sanusi, had followers in Egypt’s Western Desert. As Anglo–Italian relations cooled, the British demanded that the Egyptian royal family fire the Italian tutors and replace them with British ones. Faruq was at first defiant and became the

darling of Egyptian nationalists. His popularity was boosted by his ability to speak unaccented Arabic, the first of Muhammad 'Ali's line to do so. His mother, Nazli Sabri, was from the old Arabic-speaking aristocracy, and she made sure Faruq saw himself as Egyptian.

The unpopularity of the British in Egypt led the British to change their methods in dealing with the Egyptians. Faruq's attempts at local rule, however, were continually blocked, and by the start of World War II he had given up on battling the British and resigned himself to a lavish personal life style that was greatly criticized. Faruq was unable to survive the post-World War II period because of the failure of the Egyptian army in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The poorly armed Egyptians were only able to hold on to the Gaza Strip. In 1952, the Free Officer's Movement, a group of disgruntled officers under General Muhammad Najib, overthrew Faruq in a coup. For a short time after the coup, Faruq's infant son Fu'ad II (1952-1953) was declared king. In 1953, the monarchy ended and Faruq fled to Monaco as Egypt became a republic.

Since 1953, Egypt has been a republic but remained under the political control of the military and economically under the old Turko-Circassians. Under Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir (Gamal Abdel Nasser), Egypt moved toward the nonaligned movement and what he called "Arab socialism" to distinguish it from the socialism of the Soviet Union. Al-Nasir embarked on strengthening Egypt's industry, and in 1956 he nationalized the Suez Canal. In response, Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt. The United States and the Soviet Union interfered on the side of Egypt to end the crisis, and Egypt's ownership remains uncontested. One result of the crisis was that the United States withdrew its support for the Aswan High Dam, but the Soviet Union stepped in to replace Western investment capital.

Under al-Nasir, Egypt emerged as the center for Arab nationalism, with Egypt supporting Palestinians, Algerians, and others who sought independence from foreign control. As early as 1953, the Free Officers advocated Sudanese independence as the only means to force the British out of the country. In 1956, having given up their share of Sudan, the Egyptians were able to force the British to also give up their claims and Sudan became independent. Al-Nasir became friends with Jawaharlal Nehru of India and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia and steered a third path in national development and foreign affairs that was neither pro-American or pro-Soviet, although the Americans thought he was a communist.

In 1967, Egypt felt threatened by Israel and began to prepare for war. In the

growing mood of war in the region, Jordan's King Hussein and Syria's President Nur al-Din al-Attasi signed mutual defense pacts with Egypt to help protect themselves from Israeli aggression. In a lightning air attack, Israel wiped out most of the Egyptian and Syrian air forces on the ground and exposed Egyptian and Syrian ground troops to Israeli air strikes. In only seven days, the Israelis occupied the West Bank, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula. Al-Nasir took the blame for the disaster and resigned, but the Egyptian people took to the streets in protest to ask him to return to office. The Egyptian army had been humiliated and began planning a counterattack, but in 1970 al-Nasir died of a heart attack while trying to end the fighting between Palestinian commandos and the Jordanian army.

Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat took power as president having been al-Nasir's vice president. Sadat began to mend fences with Western powers such as the United States and began to distance himself from the Soviets. After the completion of the Aswan High Dam in 1970–71, Soviet advisers began to leave Egypt. In secret negotiations with Syria's Hafez al-Assad, the two presidents came up with a combined plan to attack Israel and get back their occupied lands. In a surprise attack on October 6, 1973, during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, the Egyptians crossed the Suez Canal and drove back the Israeli forces defending the canal. The Egyptians pushed forward for nearly three days without stiff opposition but were overly cautious when they reached the limits of their missile shield. By the end of the war, the mystique of the Israeli army had ended for Arabs even as the Syrians and Egyptians suffered sharp reverses. Israeli jets had been shot down, and Israeli prisoners of war were shown on Arab television. For the Egyptians, they had won the war even if others dispute this claim.

In subsequent rounds of negotiations, Sadat brought Egypt back to the West, and the United States replaced the Soviet Union as its biggest aid donor. Sadat opened up direct negotiations with the Israelis, and in 1978 Sadat signed the Camp David Accords that would lead to the 1979 peace treaty with Israel that would return all of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. Sadat became one of the most hated figures in modern Arab history for his unilateral negotiations and treaty. Egypt was expelled from the Arab League, and the league moved its headquarters to Tunisia. The treaty was unpopular with Egyptians and the Egyptian army. In a celebration and military review marking the October war in 1981, Sadat and 11 others in the reviewing stand were gunned down by army personnel who had been radicalized by Islamic fundamentalists. Vice President

Muhammad Husni Mubarak was wounded but survived.

Mubarak became president on Sadat's death and tried to cultivate a different image. Initially, he seemed to harken back to al-Nasir in his social interests; under Mubarak, Egypt once again took center stage in the Arab world. In 1989, Egypt was readmitted to the Arab League and Cairo once again served as its headquarters. Mubarak had been an air force pilot in the 1973 war and was a friend of Syria's Hafez al-Assad. In 1990, Egypt stood with Kuwait against Iraqi aggression, and in 1991 Egyptian troops served frontline duty in the first Gulf War. When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, however, Mubarak spoke out against it, saying the fate of Palestine and its refugees should be dealt with first; otherwise, he predicted, the invasion of Iraq would produce hundreds of Osama bin Ladins.

Mubarak had long been surrounded by corrupt advisers, and even his sons were popularly thought to be corrupt. The police were not able to deal with growing popular support for religious fundamentalists. Official moves toward a greater public face of religion were not believed, and the growing number of political and financial scandals lost him the support of the middle class. In 2011, popular protests started and continued until he was forced to step down that same year. The Egyptian military authorities at first abandoned him, and he was tried and convicted. Egypt had free and fair elections in 2012 that brought in Muhammad Morsi, who was overthrown in a popular coup in 2013. In the subsequent election, 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi, Air Force commander and head of the military, won election and is now serving as president of Egypt.

**See also:** [Barring, Sir Evelyn \(Lord Cramer\)](#); [Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [Khedive Isma'il](#); [Khedive Tawfiq](#); [King Faruq](#); [Muhammad 'Ali](#); [Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat](#); [Muhammad Husni Mubarak](#); [Saad Zaghlul](#).

*John A. Shoup*

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## HISTORY OF EGYPT: PTOLEMAIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

## Ptolemaic Period

The Ptolemaic period of Egypt's long history begins in 333 BCE when Alexander of Macedon defeated Persian King Darius III at Issus in what is now southern Turkey. He proceeded to Syria and Egypt, where most cities surrendered rather than fight. When he arrived in Egypt, he was hailed as the new pharaoh, and Egyptian stories began to circulate that he was a descendant of Netanbenu II (360–342 BCE), who had been overthrown by the Persians when they reconquered Egypt in 342 BCE. In 332 BCE, Alexander founded the first and perhaps most famous of his Alexandrias at the mouth of the Nile River. He proceeded to the Oracle of Amun in the Siwa Oasis. Egyptian archeologist Ahmed Fakhry states in his study of Siwa that the temple may have first been built during the 21st Dynasty. The fame of the oracle was such that Alexander decided he would seek its advice as to who his father was: Phillip the Macedonian or the god Zeus as his mother insisted. Alexander took only a small party of men with him on his trek to the oasis. Although no one knows what the oracle told him, Alexander began to claim his father was Zeus. He and his party nearly died on the way back to the Nile because he chose a direct path across the desert.

Alexander soon left Egypt to continue his war against Persia, finally defeating Darius at Gaugamela in Mesopotamia. Darius escaped again, but Alexander took Babylon and Darius became a fugitive. Finally, Darius was killed by his kinsman and the satrap (governor) of Parthia, Bessus. Alexander continued his march into Asia, adding all of the Persian Empire to his empire and eventually invading India. A revolt by his army made him return to Babylon, where he died of a fever in 323 BCE. Ptolemy I Soter (meaning “savior”) was able to bring his body to Egypt, where it remained until the site was lost to memory in the late Roman period.

In the scramble for Alexander's empire, his generals ended up dividing it between them, at first with more or less cordial divisions. Egypt went to the clever Ptolemy, one of Alexander's closest companions. He moved to Alexandria, which became the capital of the new state with Ptolemy the first pharaoh of the dynasty named for him in 305 BCE. He and his descendants mixed Greek ideas with those of Egypt, and among the losses for the Egyptians was imposition of Greek laws that reduced the status of women. Nonetheless, Ptolemy wholly embraced Egyptian religion and customs but gave precedence to those who could speak Greek in service to the new state. Hellenistic Egypt emerged as a strong state able to defend its borders militarily and revive its

economy with trade south to Kush, along the Red Sea coast, and down the African coast to perhaps modern Kenya and across the Indian Ocean to India. The major difference was that now Egypt, with its capital on the Mediterranean, opened more to the West.

Ptolemaic Egypt's main concern was another Macedonian dynasty in Syria, the Seleucids. The area of contest between the two empires was Palestine and the Arab Nabatean state (in what is today Jordan). The Seleucids lost most of their eastern territories to the rising power of the Parthian Persian Empire, and their expansion north into Anatolia was blocked by Rome. As Rome's power grew, Egypt was increasingly important to its survival as a source of wheat to feed Rome's growing population and to replace the declining Italian wheat production. Rome wanted stability in the east for the wheat shipments to arrive undisturbed. In the disputes between the Seleucids and the Ptolemys, Rome tended to agree with the Ptolemys. To enforce peace, Roman General Gnaeus Pompey Magnus was sent by the Roman Senate to deal with the war with Mithradates of Pontus as well as the pirates in the eastern Mediterranean. Pompey developed a close friendship with Egypt's pharaoh, Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysus (80–51 BCE). As part of the close friendship, Ptolemy XII made Pompey and the Roman Senate executors of his will on his death. Although Pompey ended the wars in the east by annexing much of it to Rome in 61 BCE, Egypt fell into civil discord at Ptolemy XII's death.

His two children, Cleopatra VII (ruled 51–30 BCE) and her younger brother Ptolemy XIII, were to wed and rule jointly. Ptolemy XIII (ruled 51–47 BCE) was only 10 years old, but he and his circle of advisers did not want to share power with his sister, Cleopatra, whom they removed in 48 BCE. Julius Caesar came to Alexandria chasing the defeated Pompey and to bring the Roman civil war to an end. Pompey thought he would be welcomed in Egypt because of his good relations with Ptolemy XII, but he was assassinated by the advisers to Ptolemy XIII when he landed. By the time Caesar arrived, Cleopatra had fled the court. The story of her being brought to Caesar wrapped in a carpet is legend, but she did appear and sought Caesar's protection. In the subsequent conflict between the forces of Ptolemy's advisers and Caesar, Ptolemy XIII was soundly defeated and killed. Cleopatra was declared ruler of Egypt in 47 BCE. During Caesar's stay in Alexandria, Cleopatra was able to use her charms on him, and they produced a son, Ptolemy XV Caesarion (died 30 BCE). Unwilling to break faith with Roman law and his Roman wife, Caesar may have recognized the child as his, but he forced Cleopatra to marry her younger brother, Ptolemy XIV



Philopater (47–44 BCE), although he was only a child.



**Bas-relief from the Temple Hathor in Dendara, Egypt, depicts Cleopatra VII Thea Philopator with her son Caesarion, the son of Julius Ceasar. (Library of Congress)**

Cleopatra had great ambitions for a new empire, even greater than that of Alexander, but these died with Caesar when he was assassinated in the Roman Senate in 44 BCE. She was able to win to her side the Roman general Marcus Antonius, or Mark Antony. In the continued civil unrest caused by Caesar's assassination, Mark Antony and Caesar's heir, Octavian, fought and defeated the Senators led by Brutus and Cassius in 41 BCE in Greece. Caesar's will made his nephew Octavian his heir, not Caesarion, and Cleopatra pushed Antony to make a case for her son. Antony eventually joined sides with Cleopatra in the conflict with Octavian, and in 31 BCE Octavian's forces defeated Antony and Cleopatra

at Actium off the coast of Greece. In 30 BCE, Antony committed suicide and Cleopatra surrendered to Octavian. To avoid being taken to Rome and displayed as a war trophy, Cleopatra committed suicide with a cobra (or asp) bite. A cobra is thought to be the snake she used because of its deep symbolism for Egypt's pharaohs. The Wadjet or protectress of the pharaohs was a cobra. Cleopatra's death ended 3,070 years of pharaohs in Egypt.

#### Roman and Byzantine Egypt

Under the Romans, Egypt lost its independence and became a valuable province with a Roman governor or prefect appointed by the emperor. The Roman emperor was viewed by most Egyptians as the new pharaoh, and although the emperors built far fewer temples and other monuments than the Ptolemies, they still continued to restore and build temples and public monuments in the Egyptian style; good examples are the Kiosk of Trajan on Philae Island and Emperor Septimius Severus's repair of the Colossi of Memnon at Luxor). Rome brought order and improved Egypt's road and irrigation systems. Egypt was important to Rome because of its wealth, especially in its agricultural surpluses, which fed the people of Rome. Latin never replaced Greek, and the local language was increasingly written in Greek letters. By the end of the Roman and Byzantine periods, Egyptians could no longer read hieroglyphics. The culture of Roman Egypt remained the blend of ancient Egypt with Hellenistic features. Nonetheless, Egypt under Rome bore a greater similarity to ancient Egypt than it did to Rome and was different and exotic to Roman visitors. Practices still included the mummification of the dead but from the Roman era came the Fayyum mummies with naturalistic painted portraits of members of the upper class wrapped in the same type of coffins used since ancient times.

Christianity was brought to Egypt soon after the death of Jesus by his apostle Mark around 33 CE. Major groups of Alexandria's population were Christians and Jews, with the city holding the largest single Jewish population following Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE by the general Titus. Alexandria not only housed Jews and Christians but also had among the last of the classical schools of philosophy based at the Serapaeum, which housed the small library that had survived the burning of the great library. Conflict, however, began between the mainly upper-class supporters of the old religion and the lower classes, who were attracted to Christianity.

Tensions between the three communities erupted after the prefect and Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria (head of the Christian church in Egypt),

fell out over the provocation by Christians, who mocked the artifacts of worship from a Mithraeum (for the worship of the Persian god Mithra) and led to a riot. In the riot, large numbers of Christians forced the pagans to the Serapaeum, where they made a stand. In 389, the Emperor Theodosius I (379–395) began issuing a set of decrees that did not officially ban pagan practices but did close specific places and disbanded the Vestal Virgins. As a result of the riot in 391, the emperor ordered the pagans to leave the Serapaeum and turned it over to the Christians to do with it as they liked. The subsequent destruction of the Serapaeum included the destruction of the last of the ancient libraries of Alexandria.

Theophilus was followed as head of the Alexandrian church by his nephew Cyril, who openly defied the prefect, Orestes, and tried to force the prefect into a subordinate position and thus put civil authority in the hands of the church. Their conflict began when, in response to a provocation by Cyril against the Jews, Prefect Orestes executed one of Cyril's men. The Jews added fuel to the fire by taking revenge against the Christians. Cyril's response was to expel all of Alexandria's Jews without consulting Orestes. The conflict between the two men intensified over the brilliant woman philosopher, Hypatia, an adviser to Orestes who represented the city's moderates. Cyril's followers attacked Orestes in the streets, wounding him in the head with a rock. The monk who threw the stone, Ammonius, was executed for the affront. Cyril's followers then attacked and killed Hypatia in 415, hacking her body into parts and then burning those parts outside the city's walls.

Cyril was an important supporter of the Nicene Creed and wrote extensively in support of Mary as the "mother of God" or *Theotokos* (many of his works formed the base of the Mary cult in medieval Christianity), and he had a bitter dispute with Nestorius, who promoted the idea of her as the "mother of Christ" or *Chrisotokos*. When Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) declared for Nestorius, Cyril continued to fight against the official state religion. In 431, he condemned the Nestorians at the Council at Ephesus. Cyril was able to muster several bishops and monks to his point of view, and they harassed the emperor until he reversed his support for the Nestorians and returned to the Nicene decision. Cyril died in approximately the year 444 and was made a saint in both the Western and Eastern churches.

Cyril had a long-lasting effect on the relationship of the Alexandrian church with the rest of Christianity. As the second largest city of the late Roman Empire, Alexandria was highly influential. Alexandrian and Byzantine (as the

late Eastern Roman Empire came to be known) relations were often hostile with the emperor. This ultimate arbiter of Christian belief and the patriarch of Alexandria were often at odds with each other. This would play a major factor in the later Arab and Islamic conquest of Egypt.

During the Roman period, Egypt was invaded twice by outside powers. The first was in 269 by Zenobia, queen of Palmyra (258–273), in the Syrian desert. Zenobia and her son Vaballathus (Wahb Allat in the language of Palmyra) had been allies of Rome until 267 when her husband and stepson were assassinated. Zenobia stepped forward as regent for her infant son and, in revenge, declared war on Rome. She was able to defeat the local Roman garrisons in Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. She also conquered north to Ancyra (modern Ankara) in Anatolia and then returned to conquer Egypt in 269.

In 272, Rome began its counterattack and moved troops in to Antioch in northern Syria, and Roman Emperor Aurelian (270–275) inflicted a major defeat on the Palmyran army. The capital city fell to a siege, and Zenobia was taken to Rome and paraded through its streets in golden chains in the manner that Cleopatra had feared Octavian would do to her. Aurelian eventually freed her, and she lived out the rest of her life in comfort in Rome.

The final invasion of Egypt came from Persia in 618. Persian King Khosraw II (590–628) had been helped in his dynastic disputes by Byzantine Emperor Maurice (582–602). When Maurice lost his throne to the usurper Phocas (602–610), the Persian king felt justified in interfering in Byzantine affairs. He launched a campaign into Syria, quickly defeating the Byzantines and taking not only Damascus but also Jerusalem in 614. The holy Christian relics became part of the booty. In 618, the Persians added Egypt to their conquests because the Byzantines were beset by another enemy threatening the Balkans. In 622, Heraclius, the successful governor of Carthage, was offered the Byzantine crown and rallied his troops. The Persian counterattack to capture Constantinople failed, and Heraclius continued into Persian-held lands. In 627, his forces defeated the Persians near what is now Mosul in Iraq. They then proceeded to the Persian capital at Ctesiphon near today's Baghdad and forced not only the surrender of Khosraw but also the return of the stolen relics from Jerusalem. Egypt remained occupied by Persian troops until 629. Persian–Egyptian relations were fairly good because Khosraw's wife, Shirin, was Christian, and the ruling Persian general, Shahrbaraz, was liked by the people. Egypt's Christians had been persecuted by the official church of Byzantium and were ready to support outsiders—just as would happen with the Arab and Muslim invasion in 639.

**See also:** [Coptic Christianity](#); [Coptic Churches and Monasteries](#).

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## HISTORY OF SOUTHERN SUDAN

The Republic of South Sudan is one of Africa's newest countries. It was established by a popular referendum in 2011 as the people of the south voted for a total separation from the northern part of Sudan. In 2005, Sudanese President 'Umar al-Bashir allowed the possibility of *infisal* (separation) from the rest of the country to end the ongoing conflict between the two major divisions in Sudan despite possible further disintegration of the state by future secessions of other provinces.

## Background

Most of the southern part of Sudan remained beyond the influences of the north because of the great swamp called the *Sudd* or “dam” in Arabic. This vast area of wetlands absorbed the waters of the White Nile River (also known as the Albert Nile) from Uganda and those of the entire Bahr al-Ghazal River system from the entire southwest of the country. The Sudd is around 300 miles (483 kilometers) long, and its vegetation is dominated by papyrus reeds and elephant grass. There is no obvious main channel, so plans for a navigable canal began to be developed as early as 1907. The Sudd did not block all trade or contact but reduced it greatly, keeping the majority of the south connected to the peoples, cultures, and languages of central Africa more than to the Arabic-speaking and Muslim north.



The great Sudd is around 300 miles (483 kilometers) long, and is a major home for both fauna and flora along the Nile. ([Mike63/iStockphoto.com](#))

The Ottoman–Egyptian *Turkiyyah* did penetrate the Sudd, opening the region for exploitation and preventing the French, Belgians, and British from claiming the region. The Egyptians left control of the region to independent Arab slaving companies with their own militias. These slavers were backed up by Arabic-speaking pastoral nomads who were encouraged to settle in the grasslands north of the Sudd. The most important of the nomads was the Razayqat lineage of the Baggarah Bedouin, who moved in large numbers into the region held by the Ngok Dinka, the Abye of Kordofan. Slavery was brought to an end by Khedive

Isma‘il, who entrusted the governorship to English general and mystic Charles Gordon. With the defeat of the Egyptians by the Mahdi in 1885, slave taking was again possible. However, when Anglo–Egyptian forces defeated the Mahdi’s successor in 1899, slave taking was again outlawed.

The governor-general of the new Anglo–Egyptian Condominium quickly set about separating the Arab Muslim north from the non-Arab, non-Muslim south. In 1910, he began a series of laws to prevent the Arabic language, customs, and Islam from penetrating the south. By 1924, all Egyptian officials were removed from the south; in 1925, all Arabic-speaking merchants were expelled; in 1928, Arabic was no longer taught in schools and was replaced with English; and, in 1930, Arabic-speaking populations who lived in the fringe areas of the south were forcibly removed to prevent contact between northerners and southerners (Lesch 1998, p. 32). For many northern Sudanese, these acts by the British explained the differences between the two segments of society and their romanticized view of reunification (Lesch 1998, p. 33). They did not consider the fact that integration of the south meant recognition of an Arab Muslim superiority that many southerners did not feel.

When Sudanese independence began to be considered, people in the south felt they were at a disadvantage. In the transition period before independence, southerners felt that their lack of education and inability to speak with their northern countrymen in Arabic put them at a disadvantage. The southerners initially agreed to integration with the north, but only if the country had a federal system that would allow the south to maintain aspects of its own languages, cultures, and religions. In 1955, a southern member of parliament of the Azande people was shot and killed at a rally, sparking the first civil war.



## Civil War

Sudan suffered the longest civil war in modern history beginning a year before independence and continuing off and on until 2011. The civil war was long and complex and became more complicated when oil was discovered, mostly in the southern part of the country, in the 1970s. Adjustments in provincial borders were made to ensure that not all of the oil was in the south. Ethnic division among southerners, especially between the Dinka and Nuer, also complicated the situation and still contributes to conflicts inside the Republic of South Sudan.

Northern Sudanese consider themselves to be Arabs and Muslims and “naturally” superior to the cultures and religions of the south. Northerners had less problems with political parties that pushed an “Islamic” agenda because even the non-Arabs in the north were Muslim. Plans for Arabicization also found less resistance among many northern non-Arabs because they saw Arabic as a means of job advancement and the Koran is written in Arabic. In the south, both programs were objectionable even though an Arabic patois called Juba Arabic had developed starting in the 19th century.

Initially, the southern leadership did not want to separate from Khartoum but wanted more local autonomy. From 1955 to 1972, the main southern Sudanese opposition was the Anya-Nya, a force composed of troops who had mutinied in 1955 and those from the preindependence Southern Corps, which had been disbanded by the Khartoum government. By 1960, the opposition had coalesced into the Sudanese African National Union (SANU). In an attempt to end the fighting, the Khartoum government agreed to a round-table conference to discuss the problems in the south. SANU leadership split between those who wanted full independence and those who wanted to remain part of Sudan. Ultimately, the commission that was set up to recommend reforms was unable to effectively put them forward because of the coup in 1969 that brought Ja‘afar al-Numayri to power.

In 1970, Numayri cracked down on the Islamist parties and allied himself with the political left. He agreed in 1972 to the Addis Ababa Agreement and in 1973 passed the Regional Self-Government Act, which allowed the south more local freedom. Briefly, the civil war ended, but Numayri’s policies varied over time, and in 1983 he unilaterally abrogated the Addis Ababa Agreement (Lesch 1998, p. 47). The new leader in the south was the highly educated John Garang de Mabior, a man of Dinka ethnicity who had fought in the Anya-Nya. He opposed the Addis Ababa Agreement but was merged into the Sudanese army

with other Anya-Nya fighters. He graduated with a PhD in agricultural economics from Iowa State University. On his return to Sudan, he was a ranking officer in the Sudanese army. In 1983, he was sent to stop a local mutiny of southern troops who did not want to be posted in the north. Instead, as part of a coup plot, he and the soldiers never returned but launched a new civil war. Garang was not for separation and did not initially fight for southern rights alone but was a committed secular socialist who wanted liberation for all Sudanese people. He felt the country had not been able to develop a national identity that embraced its multicultural citizenry. The result was the inability of Sudanese to know who they were and a growing split between an Arab Muslim north and non-Muslim African south.

Garang helped organize the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which did not focus on the south but on the social and political conditions of all Sudanese. Garang's most important international backer was Ethiopia, but this fact and his refusal to declare for southern separation or only focus on the problems of the south sparked division within the SPLM. The command was already split between civilians in charge of the SPLM and the military wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), beginning to chafe at control by Garang. A second version of Anya-Nya emerged as Anya-Nya II in 1983 under Nuer leader Gordon Kong Chuol. Even though SPLA members did not like being dependent on Ethiopia and did not like being controlled by Garang, Chuol remained loyal.

The SPLM and SPLA had several successes in the Blue Nile state and in the Nuba Mountains, where local people had their own grievances over how the Khartoum government treated them. To better combat the SPLA, the Sudanese government organized and armed local Arab Bedouins into what were called the *murahilin* (mobile units). Some 3,000 *murahilin* attacked and destroyed 40 villages in one month alone in 1989, sending some 80,000 refugees to seek shelter (Lesch 1998, p. 92). The *murahilin* were more effective in fighting the SPLA, and their success would be repeated in the Darfur clashes with the formation of the similar *janjaweed*.

In 1991, the Ethiopian government of Haileariam Desalegn Boshe was overthrown, and the new government forced the SPLM leadership to close its offices and leave the country. To cut off possible supplies from Uganda and refuge in that country, the Khartoum government gave assistance to the Christian Lord's Resistance Army (Collins 2008, pp. 255–256). The Khartoum government granted concessions to Chevron Oil International to explore and

develop oil reserves in the south and moved its provincial borders so that Kordofan, a “northern” province, would benefit from the development. Southerners protested the exploitation of “their” oil when the refinery was moved from the southern town of Bentiu to Kosti in the north. In addition, the Jonglei Canal project, which would allow water traffic greater movement on the White Nile River without having to pass through the Sudd, continued. In 1981, however, the end port was changed to Bor, where the Bahr al-Jabal tributary enters the Nile. Southerners did not like the canal idea because of the possible impact on their grazing lands in the Sudd, and few people saw any economic benefits.

Despite the Khartoum government’s inability or unwillingness to give the south its voice in decision making, Garang remained committed to unity until his death in a plane crash in 2005. In Nairobi, Kenya, before his death, Garang had signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the Khartoum government, which could have ended the conflict. However, because of Garang’s death and the growing conflict in Darfur, the Khartoum government was not able to immediately live up to its side of the agreement, and southerners saw this as the usual double-talk of the north. The conflict in the south continued, and ‘Umar al-Bashir was besieged by internal civil unrest. Under growing international pressure, in 2009 the International Criminal Court at the Hague indicted him for war crimes. Although the indictment has not yet had any major effect on al-Bashir, he nonetheless decided to let the south vote in a referendum in 2011 on whether to continue union with the north or go its own way as an independent nation. The vote was 98.83 percent for independence, and the Khartoum government agreed to the separation, with al-Bashir attending the celebrations.

## Independence

The new state has the potential to be extremely wealthy because it holds 75 percent of Sudan's oil reserves. However, the people of the region are still highly diverse with three major ethnicities—the Nuer (Nilotic), the Dinka (Nilotic), and the Azande (Bantu)—who have long histories of conflict. It did not take long for these old rivalries to reengage in civil war in 2013. The new civil war started in a power struggle between President Salva Kiir Mayardit (Dinka) and Vice President Riek Machar (Nuer). The conflict continues today with no end in sight. In addition, the dispute over which state Abyei should belong to has not been resolved.

**See also:** [Bahr al-Ghazal River](#); [Dinka](#); [Gondokoro](#); [Jonglei Canal](#); [Juba](#); [Nuer](#); [Shilluk](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## HISTORY OF SUDAN: ANCIENT KUSH AND NUBIA

Sudan's history is nearly as old as that of Egypt and begins during the Neolithic period when hunting and gathering bands began to domesticate plants and animals some 9,000 years ago. Archeological records note that people began to settle in mud brick built settlements and established a near pharaoh-like system of rule without direct Egyptian contact by 3300 BCE. In the Old Kingdom of Egypt (2700–2150 BCE), contact between Egypt and northern Sudan, then called "Kush," had been established as Egypt pushed south into Sudan to occupy parts of the north around the First Cataract near Aswan. Egypt's interest in Kush was because it was a supplier of gold and slaves. By the end of the Old Kingdom, Kush or Nubia entered into trade relations with the Egyptians, supplying hides, ivory, precious woods, and semiprecious stones such as carnelian in addition to slaves and gold.

During ancient Egypt's First Intermediate Period, Kush or Nubia regained much of the land it had lost to Egypt. However, during the Middle Kingdom (2100–1750 BCE), Egypt pushed deep into the country along the Nile River, setting up massive defensive forts and a network of caravan routes to bring the goods back to the Nile so they could be sailed down to the heart of Egypt. Pharaoh Senusret III (1874–1855 BCE) built 14 great forts south to the Third Cataract with no more than 37 miles (60 kilometers) between them (Strudwick 2006, p. 46). Among the most famous of them was the massive fort of Buhen or Qasr Ibrim, located 150 miles (240 kilometers) south of Aswan; at the start of the 19th century, it was able to still garrison Ottoman troops (Strudwick 2006, p. 47).

Egyptian pharaohs liked to use Nubian troops in their armies, and Kush or Nubia had to supply them as part of a trade deal enforced by Egyptian troops on Nubian soil. Nubia was not annexed to Egypt but was able to maintain a degree of independence ruled by its own dynasties. When Egypt fell to the Hyksos,

Nubia had its chance to once again regain lost lands, and a new state emerged after the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces that was based at Kermah near modern-day Dunqulah (Dongola). The new king of Kermah established a communications route in the desert west of the Nile River valley that allowed Nubian and Hyksos leaders to communicate with each other. An alliance was struck between the two kingdoms that aimed to destroy Egypt's kingdom based at Thebes. Pharaoh Kamose (1555–1550 BCE) intercepted the messages being sent between the Hyksos king and the king of Kush and launched a preemptive war that caught his opponents unprepared. Kamose died in battle, but his brother Ahmose (1550–1525 BCE) took up the fight, eventually taking the Hyksos capital at Avaris in the Nile delta and pushing the Hyksos out of Egypt.

Subsequent pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty—Thutmose I (1504–1492 BCE) and Thutmose III (1479–1425)—pushed Egyptian control up the Nile River as far as the Fourth Cataract, more deeply into Nubia than ever before. The local kings and chiefs were able to keep their lands but became tributaries to the Egyptian pharaoh, sending him gold and slaves. The leadership was greatly Egyptianized because their children were sent to the pharaoh's court to serve as pages to the Egyptian monarch. When they reached adulthood, they were sent back to rule their people for the pharaoh and send their own children to Thebes to continue service in the palace. Egyptian religion and language spread in the kingdom as did the presence of Egyptian officials, army officers, priests, and settlers. The spread of the Egyptian language would later help in the spread of Christianity.

Although Nubia or Kush was occupied, with the decline of the New Kingdom's power, Nubia's elite saw themselves as the paragons of ancient Egyptian belief and established a new kingdom based at Napata. In 750 BCE, Napata's King Kashta (765–745 BCE) began to extend his authority north along the Nile; by 745 BCE, he had taken Upper Egypt. His work was continued by his successor, Piye (or Piankhy) who founded the 25th Dynasty in 746 BCE by finishing the conquest of Lower Egypt. The 25th Dynasty produced one of the last great pharaohs with Taharqa (690–664 BCE). The early years of his reign were peaceful, and he initiated many major building projects, but Nubian rule was not popular with the Egyptian princes of Sais (in Lower Egypt), who plotted with the Assyrians to push the Nubians out of the country. Taharqa was defeated by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (705–681 BCE) and forced to flee back up the Nile to Nubia. Several years later, Taharqa was able to reconquer as far north as Thebes. The last Nubian pharaoh of Egypt was Tanutamani (664–655 BCE), but

he only ruled over the southern part of Egypt. The prince of Sais, Psamtik (664–610 BCE), founded the 26th Dynasty, became independent of Assyria, and launched the last great age of Egypt's pharaohs.

The Egyptians invaded Nubia and took the capital, Napata, around 590 BCE. The Nubian elite moved farther south to Meroë at the Sixth Cataract. There, in near isolation from Egypt and the events of late antiquity, the people of Nubia developed a thriving kingdom untouched by Egyptian influences. Egypt fell to Alexander and the Ptolemies and then to Rome, but Nubia remained independent and free. The religion was similar to that of ancient Egypt, but Nubians had their own pantheon of gods. Kings and queens were buried in pyramids, but ones that were much steeper than those of Egypt. Kingship passed from brother to brother or to sister until all siblings were dead before the crown moved to the next generation.

Meroë expanded north down the Nile River and once more shared borders with Egypt, which was now occupied by Rome. In general, relations were good, but the marauding raids of a people known as the Blemmyes occasionally turned relations hostile. The Blemmyes remain somewhat mysterious but seem to have been a nomadic people similar to the Beja of today, although scholars doubt they are the same people. The Blemmyes' religion was centered at Kalabsha and Philae where their god, Mandulis (a solar god in the shape of a lion), was worshipped. Rome fought several wars with the Blemmyes, as did later Byzantines. Rome invaded Nubia several times, and in 23 BCE Romans destroyed Napata. However, finding the region far too underpopulated and poor, they soon withdrew.

In the first two centuries CE, the modern Nubian peoples arrived and first served as mercenaries in the army. They began to intermarry with the local elite and became an important military aristocracy, eventually gaining power. The kingdom was, however, destroyed when King Ezana of Aksum (modern Ethiopia) conquered the region in 350 CE and reduced it to a province in his kingdom.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#).

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## HISTORY OF SUDAN: ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Antiquity ends with the conquest of Sudan by Ethiopian King Ezana in 350 CE. After the conquest, three new kingdoms emerged: Nobatia in the north, Makuria in the middle, and Alwa or Alodia in the south. The power of Aksum waned with the Sassanian Persian expansion into the Arabian Peninsula and Yemen in the sixth century CE. Coptic Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia in the fourth century CE, opening up greater influences from Egypt and lessening ties with Jewish communities in Yemen. By the fifth century CE, the Coptic church had made great headway in both Nobatia and Alwa, but the central kingdom of Makuria favored the Orthodox or Melkite church—that of the Byzantine emperor. Nonetheless, once Makuria absorbed its northern neighbor, Nobatia, in the seventh century CE, it quickly accepted the Coptic church.

Christianity became deeply rooted in Sudan and, with a strong army of cavalry and archers that were similar to the military strengths of the Arabs and Muslims, the Nubians were able to stop two attempted invasions in the seventh century CE by Arab Muslim forces from Egypt. In 641, Arab commander ‘Abdallah ibn Abi Sarh took an army that penetrated as far south as the city of Dongola (Dunqulah) before meeting such stiff resistance that he had to retreat. As a result of the Arab defeat at the Battle of Dunqulah, the Arab leader Abi Sarh and the Nubian monarch Qalidurat signed a treaty called the *baqt* (or *bakt*), or pact of peace (the term derived from the ancient Egyptian word for barter), that established friendly relations between the Umayyads (661–750 CE) of Damascus and their governors of Egypt and the Kingdom of Makuria. The treaty stated that citizens of the other country could visit and establish trade relations in



the other's territory but could not permanently settle. Runaway slaves and criminals would be extradited back to their original lands, and Nubia was to send 350 to 400 slaves per year to the Arabs as an annual fee. The slaves could only be adults of both sexes but not children or the elderly. In addition, a mosque would have to be maintained in the capital by the Nubians for Muslim visitors. The Arabs, in some versions of the text, were to send food provisions south, mainly in the form of grain, but they were not bound to assist the Nubians if attacked by a third party and vice versa.

The *baqt* blocked the southern expansion of the Arabs and Islam for several centuries, and the pact remained unbroken until Egypt suffered from internal disorder in the ninth century CE and Nubian King Zacharias III (822–854) stopped payment in 833. He made an alliance with the Beja, who also stopped their yearly payment to the 'Abbasid *khalifah* (caliph) in 854. With the Beja, the Nubians were able to attack Egypt and take the cities and town as far north as Edfu. Zacharias sent his son, Georgios, to renegotiate the pact with the 'Abbasid ruler al-Mu'atim (833–842), who reduced the tribute to once every three years.

When Egypt fell to the Shi'ite Fatamids (969–1071), the Nubian state and Egypt had their best period of friendly relations. The Fatamids had few friends or allies in the mainly Sunni world, and soon the slaves sent by Nubia became the backbone of the Fatamid army. Nonetheless, the slave trade served to discredit both the monarchy and the church in the eyes of their people and began to weaken state authority. In response, local aristocrats began to build fortified castles of their own and to defy state authority.

Relations with Egypt also became poor when the Sunni Ayyubids (1071–1252) took power from the last Fatamids. Conditions worsened when Egypt fell to the Mamalik (1252–1517) in the 13th century. The Ayyubids and Mamalik encouraged the movement of Bedouin Arabs south into Sudan when they needed better pasturelands. In the border area emerged mixed Arab and Beja tribes such as the Bani Kanz, who lived between the borders of the two states. The Beja element accepted Islam and the Arab patriarchal family system, and leadership moved from Beja to Arab lineages. With the strong influence of the Arabic language and family systems reinforced by Islam, even personal identity shifted from Beja to Arab. Encouraged by Egyptian authorities, Arab Bedouin incursions into Nubia increased in number, and increasing numbers of them stayed permanently on the Nubian side. Local lords were willing and able to come to terms with them while the central state proved unable or unwilling to do so.

Arabic language and Islam began to replace the Nubian language and Christianity except among settled urban residents, who still spoke their language as the main form of communication even though some were converting to Islam. Arabization and Islamization happened slowly over several generations in Sudan. Arab Bedouin tribes were allowed to move permanently into northern Nubia and out into the deserts both to the east and west of the Nile. Islamization also was happening among the ruling Makurian royal family, and the Mamalik placed the Muslim prince Sayf al-Din ‘Abdallah Barshambu on the throne in 1312. He converted the main cathedral in Dunqulah into a mosque in 1317. The urban Nubian state based on the Makurian capital of Dunqulah, however, faded away, with the last king in 1397 calling for aid against the Mamalik. With the collapse of Makuria and Alwa a bit later, the tribal Muslim Bani Kanz or Kenz Nubians took control of the region and were recognized by the Mamalik as the legitimate rulers of the area until the Ottoman conquest in 1517 when the area was absorbed into Egypt.

Following the collapse of the northern states in Sudan, two states emerged. The Sultanate of Fur was located west of the Nile and based in the mountainous Jabal Marra in Darfur. The other, the Sultanate of Funj, emerged in the Jazirah (Gezera) along the Blue Nile River and based on its capital city of Sennar. Both seemed to be greatly Islamized, and even the ruling dynasty of Sennar adopted Arab genealogies.

The Sultanate of Darfur emerged sometime in the 10th century CE under the Daju Dynasty, which lasted until the 12th century when the rival Tunjur Dynasty took over. Some historians have tried to link state building in Darfur with diffusion from the Lake Chad region, but others refute this claim, even with the migration of Sahel peoples (Insoll 2003, p. 128). Darfur is geographically different from the Nile region, and the Jabal Marra effectively served as a barrier between the regions and ethnic groups. Darfur is so named because its majority ethnicity is the Fur, who are related to groups of the Sahel region reaching as far west as Senegal. Darfur was open to migration of Sahel peoples, including the Fulani and Hausa. Nonetheless, Nubians, Beja, Arabs, and others did not penetrate into Darfur until recent times.

The Fur built large, stone settlements called *fashir*. The largest ones where the sultan lived was designated as *al-Fashir*. Although it is generally accepted that Islamization began around the year 1000, the capital of the kingdom, Tajawa, was noted as not being Muslim in 1153 by famous Arab geographer al-Idirisi—if his Tajawin can be identified as Darfur (Insoll 2003, p. 128). Insoll

notes that the first Muslim building found in Darfur is a mosque from around 1200 at Uri, the early Tunjur capital. Uri was located at the juncture of two major trade routes: the Darb al-‘Arabin (“Forty Day Road”), which connected the Bahr al-Ghazal River and Egypt, and the other that connected to Marzuq (Marzouk) near the Mediterranean Sea in Libya.

The first fully Muslim dynasty of Darfur was the Keira, which ruled from the 17th to the 20th centuries. They encouraged trade along the Darb al-‘Arabin with Egypt and also encouraged the spread of Islam. Their first sultan, Sulayman Solong, forbade un-Islamic practices such as human sacrifice and supported Muslim holy men (*faqir* singular and *fuqara* plural) or mystics in establishing learning centers. Initially, it seems, Islam was adopted by commoners while the aristocracy remained animist. Despite the growing conversions to Islam, pre-Islamic practices such as animal sacrifice to bring rain and taboos on blacksmiths continue until today.

Sulayman’s grandson, Ahmad Bakr (1682–1722), made Islam the official religion of the state and built numerous mosques in his kingdom. Under later sultans, Darfur tried to expand and fought wars with both the Funj and the Central African state of Wadai. When the Egyptian ruler Muhammad ‘Ali (1805–1848) decided to invade Sudan, Darfur was left to the side so his forces could concentrate on the conquest and control of the Nile River. It was only later, when what in Sudan is called the *Turkiyyah* or Turkish period expanded, that Darfur came under Egyptian rule. Nonetheless, the sultanate endured into the 20th century.

Funj did not last as long as Darfur. It was founded in the period following the collapse of the three Nubian kingdoms and the rise of tribalism in northern Sudan. The Funj are yet today not fully understood as an ethnic group, although most likely they were Nubians who originally lived along the White Nile River where the Nilotic Shilluk now live. In their own genealogies, they claim to be Arabs, descendants of Umayyad refugees who escaped the mass execution of the entire family by the ‘Abbasids in 750. The founder of the Funj state, Amara Dunqas, defeated the last Christian ruler of Alwa in 1504 and established his new state at Sennar (or Sinnar) (Lapidus 1988, p. 126).

The Funj left a written record of their history called the *Funj Chronicle* by the court scribe *Katib* (the Arabic word for a scribe) al-Shuna dating from 1821, just prior to the collapse of the state (Insoll 2003, p. 119). The Funj wealth and power were based on three main sources: trade in gold, trade in horses, and agricultural production. The kingdom was divided between the aristocracy,

whose members built massive stone or mud brick forts and palaces and protected them with local armies. Although the heart of the kingdom was the capital Sennar, places such as Dunqulah (Dongola) were equally important for the production of horses, one of the most important trade items. The Funj ruler converted to Islam by 1523, but Islam at first was a “royal cult” and not open for the average person.

The Funj kingdom had already fallen into civil strife before the Egyptian invasion and conquest, which spelled its death. The kingdom collapsed. The modern period of history begins with the Egyptian invasion of 1821, which brought an end to most of the independent kingdoms.

**See also:** [Islam on the Nile](#); [Sennar](#); [Shilluk](#); [Sufism and Sufi Brotherhoods](#).

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## HISTORY OF SUDAN: MODERN PERIOD

The modern period begins with the 1820–21 conquest of Sudan by the Egyptian ruler Muhammad ‘Ali. His son, Isma‘il, invaded Sudan with a force of 5,000 men. Muhammad ‘Ali’s modern army, armed with the latest weapons and trained by European officers, proved unbeatable on the battlefield. It made quick progress up the Nile, and Isma‘il decided not to engage states such as Darfur. The weakened sultanate of Funj was no match for the Egyptians and Sannar, the capital, was taken in 1821 with no resistance. The last king, Badi VII, was allowed to remain as the governor of the new province under Ottoman–Egyptian rule, but he faded into obscurity (Moorehead 2000, pp. 203–204).

The Egyptian army faced the Arabic-speaking Shayqiyyah who are of Nubian origin, but had been like many other Sudanese during the later medieval period and adopted both the Arabic language and Arabic lineages. The Shayqiyyah have a strong sense of self-worth and total contempt for death. Their cavalry approached their enemies shouting in Arabic “Al-Salam ‘Alaykum” (“Peace be with you”) partially to show the low esteem they felt for their enemies and partially to show their own lack of fear. The Shayqiyyah were defeated by the firepower of the Egyptians but were then co-opted to join them in their continued conquest.

The White Nile was less interesting to the Egyptians because the Blue Nile had known gold mines at Fazughli. The mines turned out to be a great disappointment, however. Progress further along the Blue Nile was stopped by the deep gorge from which the river emerges more than anything else. The gorge was too narrow even for a single person to ascend on foot. Both of Muhammad ‘Ali’s sons, Ibrahim and Isma‘il, asked to return to Cairo. Ibrahim and his doctor left first because of Ibrahim’s poor health, but later Isma‘il was allowed to return. On the way back, an incident with a local leader, Mek Nimr, the defeated ruler of Shendy, ended in Isma‘il’s death.

The next period in Sudanese history is called the *Turkiyyah* or Turkish period. It would last until the Sudanese mystic Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi, arose in 1881 to drive the “Turks” out. The Egyptians did not try to extend their authority beyond the shores of the two major rivers, the White and Blue Niles. In northern Sudan where local leaders were Muslim and many spoke Arabic, autonomy was allowed as long as taxes were paid. The sultan of Darfur remained “independent” until the British defeated the last ruler in 1915.

Egypt joined in the race for African resources, pushing up the White Nile and extending the area controlled by Cairo, at least in name, to the border with Uganda. Egypt allowed local Arab slavers the right to build private armies and to conquer southern Sudan in exchange for carrying out territorial expansion under the Egyptian flag. The Egyptians built the city of Khartoum at the place where the Blue Nile joins the White Nile, and the first governors of the country were Turkish-speaking officers who saw their role was to exploit the country as much as possible. ‘Ali Khurshid Agha Pasha was the first governor appointed in 1826. He pushed Egyptian control up the White Nile and sent Salim *Qapudan* (captain) to extend control as far south as possible and penetrating the Sudd in 1841. Khurshid Pasha helped bring the settled farmers back to their lands and gained the support of the local elite, both religious and secular. In 1838, he was replaced by Ahmad Pasha Abu Widan, who was not nearly as powerful a figure as Khurshid Pasha. As a result, Sudan slipped slowly into chaos. The situation was compounded by succession of a pro-European Sa‘id as khedive (1854–1863) who began appointing Europeans in leadership positions. This was greatly resented by the Arabic-speaking Muslims who did not want to be told what to do by Christian Europeans. Trade on the White Nile was opened to Europeans, and even Catholic missionaries arrived. In 1854, under pressure from European powers, Sa‘id asked the governor-general of Sudan to end the slave trade. The trade, however, was highly profitable, and the nearly independent rulers of southern Sudan refused to abide by the ban.

The south had been left to several Arabic-speaking slave traders who operated like independent companies on the model of the British East India Company. Among the most famous and important of them was al-Zubayr Rahmah al-Mansur (1830–1913). He was able to establish effective control over much of the Bahr al-Ghazal area of southwestern Sudan. The Khedive Isma‘il (1863–1879) sent an army to defeat al-Zubayr in 1871 and force his unification with Egyptian Sudan, but al-Zubayr’s forces defeated the Egyptians. To bring this

massive area under Egyptian rule and prevent its annexation by the French, Isma‘il appointed al-Zubayr provincial governor of Bahr al-Ghazal in 1873. Al-Zubayr accepted the appointment and ruled the region harshly, exploiting the non-Muslims as slaves and allowing Arabic-speaking pastoral nomads to move into the region to create added pressure on the non-Arab and non-Muslim peoples. The Arabs who moved in were mainly sublineages of the powerful Baggarah tribe, the largest Arab tribe in Sudan.

In 1873, al-Zubayr invaded Darfur, and his army made quick work of the Fur forces. To the great embarrassment of the khedive, he was forced to approve the conquest and recognize al-Zubayr as governor of Darfur as well. Al-Zubayr wanted to be named governor-general of Sudan, but his ambitions were thwarted by British General Charles Gordon, who demanded that he be made governor-general to end the slave trade. Gordon and Khedive Isma‘il liked and respected each other, and Isma‘il appointed Gordon. Al-Zubayr then came to Cairo to protest the appointment and demand he be made governor-general instead of Gordon. Taking advantage of al-Zubayr’s presence in Cairo, the khedive placed him under house arrest where he would remain until 1899 and the reconquest of Sudan was complete. Gordon was successful in stabilizing the border with Ethiopia, stamping out rebellion (including hanging al-Zubayr’s son, Sulayman), and crushing the slave trade, but his appointments of European Christians over Muslim Arabs and Turks only served to aggravate the opinions of most Sudanese, especially the religious elite. In 1879, Gordon resigned from his post on hearing that the khedive had resigned and left Egypt for Istanbul and that the new khedive was Tawfiq (1879–1892). The Turkiyyah stumbled along for another six years before the rise of a mystic holy man, Muhammad Ahmad, who was called “the Mahdi.”

#### The Mahdiyyah (1881–1898)

The Mahdiyyah period is named for the founder of the state, Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Abdallah (1844–1885), who was a Muslim mystic from Dongola and of simple Ja‘aliyyin (Arabized Nubian) stock. He began studying Koran at an early age and showed a strong ability in religious training. He traveled to different regions of Sudan to study with the well-known shaykhs such as al-Amin al-Suwaylih, Muhammad al-Dikayr ‘Abdallah al-Khujali. and finally with the Sufi shaykh Muhammad Sharif Nur al-Da’im. By 1868, Muhammad Ahmad had gained the position of shaykh and was able to induct new adherents into the order. In 1870, his family moved to Aba Island on the White Nile River south of

Khartoum, and Muhammad Ahmad built a mosque where his preaching attracted a large number of followers.

Muhammad Ahmad and Muhammad Sharif, one of his former teachers, fell out because of a dispute between their followers that ended with the teacher expelling his pupil from the order. Muhammad Sharif refused all attempts at reconciliation. In anguish, Muhammad Ahmad turned to another Sufi leader, *Shaykh* al-Qurayshi wad al-Zayn who accepted Muhammad Ahmad back into the *Samaniyyah tariqah* or Sufi order. When wad al-Zayn died in 1878, Muhammad Ahmad was recognized as the new leader by wad al-Zayn's men. It was then that Muhammad Ahmad met his major supporter and eventual successor, 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Ta'ishi (1846–1899) of the powerful Baggarah tribe.

Collins notes that the Egyptian authorities had appointed the top Muslim leaders for Sudan mostly from Egypt, and the relationship between them and the local Sudanese Islamic scholars was not good (Collins 2008, p. 18). The Egyptians considered the Sudanese, especially the Sufi *shuyukh* (*shaykh* plural) to be ignorant and perpetuate superstition. They condemned as un-Islamic such things as visitations to holy men and women's tombs, even though such practice was common in Egypt. Sufism had deep roots in Sudan, and the Islamization of the country had been at the hands of Sufi *shuyukh* rather than orthodox theologians. The result was that the Sudanese '*ulama*' (religious scholars) were at odds with those appointed from Egypt.

In 1881, Muhammad Ahmad declared his independence from the Turkiyyah and began his rebellion to free Sudan from outside control. The *Khatamiyyah* Sufi order was controlled by the family of 'Uthman al-Mirghani al-Khatim, who had strong connections with Ottoman Mecca. He backed the Turkiyyah, which began the rivalry between the two orders, the Samaniyyah and the *Khatamiyyah*. When the *Khatamiyyah* home base of Kassala fell to the Mahdi's forces, the head of the *Khatamiyyah* was forced to flee to Egypt where he remained until the reconquest in 1899.

In the same year, Muhammad Ahmad had several dreams in which the Prophet Muhammad came to him and appointed him the *Mahdi* (spiritual guide) and as a *mujadid* or renewer of Islam. He wrote letters to the leaders of northern Sudan proclaiming himself to be the *Imam* or leader of the entire Islamic world, the true *khalifah* or successor to the Prophet Muhammad, a title held by the Ottoman sultan, and expected Mahdi who would appear at the last days before final judgment. His proclamation resulted in local Egyptian authorities



attempting to arrest him, but the attempt ended in disaster when Muhammad Ahmad's followers fought with rocks and sticks and forced the Egyptian forces to retreat.

The defeat of the much better armed government forces brought many more converts to Muhammad Ahmad's cause; he named them as *ansar* or assistants based on the name given to the people of Medina by the Prophet. His new supporters came from the Sudanese religious authorities, from Muhammad Ahmad's own Ja'aliyyin Arabs, and from the powerful Bedouin Baggarah tribe. Muhammad Ahmad besieged the town of al-'Ubayd (El Obied), which fell in January 1883 (Collins 2008, p. 22). Muhammad Ahmad advanced far to the north and east where the Hadendaw Beja leader, 'Uthman Diqna, offered his submission. In 1882, Britain had occupied Egypt to control the Suez Canal and end a rebellion against the khedive by the Egyptian officer Ahmad 'Urabi that brought British troops to the Red Sea city of Suakin. 'Uthman Diqna joined the rebellion and soon defeated a small force of Anglo-Egyptian troops near Suakin. Although a second force was able to win a battle against Diqna's men, it soon had to return to Suakin. With Britain now partially responsible for Sudan, an army of 10,000 men commanded by Colonel William Hicks marched into Sudan to put down the Mahdi's rebellion. Better armed with new guns and cannons, the Anglo-Egyptian force tried to find and destroy the Mahdi, but at Shaykan the Anglo-Egyptian force marched into a well-set ambush and died nearly to the last man. The result was not only a further enhancement of the Mahdi's power and reputation but also more guns falling into the hands of his *ansar*. They now were as well armed as the Egyptian army.

What happened next is perhaps one of the strangest contests in modern African history, one that pit General Charles Gordon a Christian soldier with a strong sense of his own mystical virtues, against the Sudanese Sufi, Muhammad Ahmad. Gordon's orders were to evacuate Egyptians, civilians, and military personnel from Sudan. Gordon, who arrived in Khartoum in 1884, decided that he would not abandon Khartoum and tried to force the British government to shoulder the responsibility of protecting not only Egyptian and foreign lives and property but also those Sudanese who did not support the Mahdi. Gordon suggested turning Sudan over to his former enemy al-Zubayr, but this was quickly rejected by nearly everyone, including al-Zubayr. Nonetheless, in April 1885, some 2,500 Egyptians and foreigners were evacuated successfully to Egypt on the steamships under Gordon's command and because the Mahdi had not yet blocked the Nile with the cannon he captured from Hicks.

As the months progressed, relief for Gordon seemed less likely, and the Mahdi began the siege of Khartoum in March 1884. Nonetheless, Gordon's steamers were still able to keep the Nile route open. The British public was putting pressure on the British government to do something, and eventually a force of British soldiers was sent to Egypt to be properly acclimatized and trained for desert warfare. The infantry progressed slowly, but the British commander, Lord Garnet Wolseley (who served as the model for Gilbert and Sullivan's "Modern Major General" in *The Pirates of Penzance*), sent a camel corps under Sir Hubert Stuart toward Khartoum. The corps successfully held off two attacks by 'Uthman Digna's men and made it to Metemma, where Gordon's steamships were waiting to take them to Khartoum. However, they arrived on January 28, 1885, two days after Khartoum had fallen (Barthorp 1986, pp. 110, 111).

Not wanting to be tainted by living in Khartoum, the Mahdi built a new capital city on the western bank of the Nile across from Khartoum and called it Umm Durman (Omdurman). It had begun as the Mahdi's war camp during the siege of Khartoum, but when Khartoum fell he did not want to live in the governor's palace in a city built by the Turks. Following the fall of Khartoum, the other garrisons and towns in Sudan that had not yet been taken fell to the Mahdi's men. Suakin, on the Red Sea, remained in Egyptian hands, as did the Nile city of Wadi Halfa, marking the northern limit of the Mahdi's new independent state. The Mahdi set about organizing the new state and appointed men such as close friend Ahmad Sulayman as head of finances (*bayt al-mal*) and Ahmad 'Ali as chief judge or *qadi al-Islam*. Divisions between the leadership of the new movement became apparent six months later when the Mahdi died, possibly of typhus. The Ja'aliyyin (also called '*Arab al-Bahr*' or "River Arabs"), and especially the kinsmen of the Mahdi, felt they were superior by both birth and education (self-styled *ashraf* or nobles) in comparison with the large body of Bedouin called the *Awlad al-Gharib* led by 'Abdallah al-Ta'ishi. To end the conflict over the succession, the Mahdi's son, Muhammad al-Sharif, swore allegiance to 'Abdallah, making him the sole successor to Muhammad Ahmad.

'Abdallah proved to be a good administrator as well as an effective military commander. He had workshops built to keep Gordon's captured steamships working and to manufacture ammunition because the European powers did not allow him access to outside markets. He furthered the work of the Mahdi in establishing a court system based on *shari'ah* (Islamic law) and the judgments of the Mahdi, which had equal status. He successfully crushed three rebellions and

launched a highly successful raid into Ethiopia, taking and sacking the city of Gondar in 1887. He repelled the subsequent Ethiopian invasion in 1889 that ended in the death of King Yohannes IV and total defeat of the Ethiopian army. He was able to maintain the nation's economy, based on agriculture, despite periods of drought. He was also able to maintain the country's claim on the Nile River as far south as the border with the Belgian Congo, defeating a European-led force in 1893. However, his forces suffered decisive defeats in 1894 and 1897, ending the Mahdist state's control over the south and advancing claims to the region by France and Belgium. Often painted as an ignorant savage by the Europeans, especially the British, 'Abdallah was able to overcome many obstacles and rule a fairly successful state until the British invasion of 1898.

#### The Anglo–Egyptian Condominium

The Anglo–Egyptian invasion was led by General Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850–1916), who had distinguished himself in the battles during the relief effort to rescue Gordon. In 1885, he was made governor of the Egyptian eastern Red Sea province at Suakin and attempted to take on 'Uthman Diqna, who had become an increasing threat. In the attack on 'Uthman's forces at Handub, Kitchener suffered a wound to the jaw. He was promoted for bravery in the field and in 1889 commanded the Egyptian cavalry at the Battle of Toski on the Egyptian–Sudanese border. In 1890, he was appointed the *Sirdar* or commander in chief of the Egyptian forces. Because of their extensive training, the Egyptians were ready to reconquer Sudan. The invasion was launched after a battle at Firkah in 1896 in which the Egyptians performed their tasks admirably well and were praised by Kitchener.

In early summer 1896, the invasion began with troops moving into the Mahdiyyah. Kitchener's forces included armed river boats and artillery units backed by a railroad that was built to bring supplies to the front as quickly as possible. By July 1896, 103 miles (166 kilometers) of track had been laid, and the line progressed at a rate of approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) per day (Barthorp 1986, p. 141). Kitchener's forces moved up the Nile, and the Mahdi commander at Berber unexpectedly withdrew after the loss of Abu Hamid to the British. Kitchener decided to march there rather than stick to the original plan to establish a strong base at Abu Hamid before moving farther into Sudan. With Berber's abandonment, Kitchener was able to move much farther than expected, but his superiors in both Cairo and London would not sanction his move any farther south.

Berber is located on the eastern bank of the Nile River. To help hold it, Kitchener authorized a fort to be built at the confluence of the Atbara and the White Nile Rivers. This fort was at risk from the forces of both ‘Uthman Digna and *Amir* Mahmud at Metemmeh. The forces of the *khalifah* moved out of Umm Durman to face the British, but arguments between the commanders about who should lead the attack caused the army to fall back to the capital. *Amir* Mahmud urged action to stop the Anglo–Egyptian forces and eventually he marched north without reinforcements and observed by the British gunships. Eventually, the British attacked Mahmud’s fortified camp at Nakhlaylah, and Mahmud was captured and his forces defeated. The British were free to advance to Metemmeh, and by September they were within sight of Umm Durman. On September 2, 1898, the two armies met, and the *khalifah* men were defeated, although the *khalifah* escaped.

British attention was drawn away from pursuing the *khalifah* because of the arrival of a French expedition on the upper White Nile at Fashoda (modern Kodok). Kitchener arrived in Fashoda to find French Major Jean-Baptiste Marchand with a small force to claim the Nile sources for France. In the subsequent negotiations, the two powers agreed to claim two mighty rivers: the Congo for France and the Nile for Britain.

In 1899, the British were finally able to catch the *khalifah* and some 5,000 men near the town of Kosti. The *khalifah* was found dead on his prayer rug with his most loyal assistants dead around him. The Mahdiyyah came to an end, and the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium began. Although the British had defeated the *khalifah*, other leaders such as ‘Uthman Digna remained unconquered until his capture in 1900 and the sultan of Darfur, ‘Ali Dinar, joined the Turkish side in World War I. The British had to launch a military expedition to finally depose him and end the unrest in northern Sudan in 1916 (Collins 2008, p. 35).

British rule in Sudan set the stage for the postindependence problems between the north and south. Sir Reginald Wingate embarked on a policy to stop the spread of Arabic and Islam in the south and encourage the use of English and conversion to Christianity. In 1910, he began the forced withdrawal of Arabic-speaking merchants and replaced northerners in the military and police with recent recruits from the south. Arabic language was discouraged and Arab dress banned (Collins 2008, p. 35).

In the north, Wingate supported orthodox Islam against Sufism and popular practices out of fear of a revival of the Mahdi. Shari‘ah courts were allowed for disputes between northerners. The British feared the growth of an educated

Sudanese elite and instead preferred to use indirect rule through local tribal leaders. This fear grew out of the growing Arab nationalism in Egypt and Egyptian demands for independence. In the end, the two separate policies in the north and south would make unity difficult. The south proved hard to rule; although some southerners converted to Christianity, many retained their traditional religions. The British were forced to rule the south in an ad hoc fashion—but always with an anti-northern—that is, anti-Islamic and anti-Arab—tendency.

The condominium ended in 1954 as a result of the decision by the Free Officers Movement to give up Egyptian claims to Sudan. The British used the excuse that their presence in Sudan was required because of Egyptian occupation. The Free Officers realized that to force the British to leave, they would have to support Sudanese independence. Two years later, in 1956, Sudan became independent.

#### Independence 1956 to the Present

Sudan's first years of independence were turbulent, with the two major parts of the country unprepared for unity. In the north, political parties emerged based on divisions from the Mahdiyyah period. In the south, unity proved difficult and led to a civil war starting in 1955. The first civil war lasted from 1955 to 1972 and the second one from 1983 to 2005. Although the British period lasted for only 56 years, its impact lasts to this day.

In the north, Egyptian Arab nationalism was a major force, and in 1969 the Sudanese Free Officers took control of Khartoum. Ja'afar al-Numayri (1930–2009) became the leader of the newly announced Democratic Republic of Sudan. Numayri's period brought in one of the few periods of stability and peace—including a settlement with the southerners to make the south autonomous. Numayri survived two coup attempts, one by Sadiq al-Mahdi (1935–), a direct descendant of Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, and one by communist offices in the military. Numayri continued to rule the country until removed in a military coup in 1985. Numayri then moved to Egypt in exile, but in 1999 he returned to Sudan and lived in Umm Durman until his death in 2009.

The leader of the military coup was General 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Siwar al-Dhahabi (1934–), who held power for one year before surrendering the presidency to Sadiq al-Mahdi. Al-Mahdi was head of the Ummah (National) Party, with its base firmly among the Ja'aliyyin Arabs. His government included two other religious parties: the National Islamic Front led by his brother-in-law,

Hassan al-Turabi, and the Democratic Unionist Party led by al-Sayyid Muhammad ‘Uthman al-Mirghani. The government thus brought together the Samaniyyah (al-Mahdi) and Khatimiyyah (al-Mirgahni) Sufi orders as well as the more orthodox Muslim Brotherhood (al-Turabi). The Mahdi government fell out with the leaders of the south mainly over implementation of Islamic law. Al-Mahdi was willing to end the use of shari‘ah but ran into problems with growing fundamentalism among northerners. Fundamentalism became an issue in Sudan following the arrival of large numbers of non-Sudanese fundamentalists in the 1980s. Sudanese identity became more and more of an issue to both Arabs and Africans. In the end, the more radical National Islamic Front emerged the most powerful voice in the north, and in 1989 General ‘Umar al-Bashir overthrew the Mahdi government and Sadiq al-Mahdi fled to exile abroad. Al-Mahdi returned from exile in 2000 and ran in the presidential elections in 2010.

In 1990, the new government began to run into international problems when Bashir announced that Sudan’s borders would be open to any “brother Arab” without a visa. This made Sudan a popular place for Arab fighters returning from Afghanistan following the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Under the influence of al-Turabi, the government passed several laws that included public dress codes and harsh (*hadud*) punishments based on Islamic principles.

Sudan’s north–south divisions became permanent, and the Muslim but non-Arab northern regions such as Darfur also sank into conflict between settled Fur farmers and pastoral nomad Arabs. Although the issues in Darfur were exacerbated by drought and the need to find pastures for livestock, the Sudanese government armed the Arab nomads and allowed them to set up militias called *janjaweed*, which means “armed and mounted man” in the local Arabic dialect. In the south, the government did the same thing to combat southern separatist groups. Arabic-speaking nomads called the  *Murahilin*  (mobile militia) were also armed and allowed to raid even for slaves. Al-Bashir is now a wanted man following his 2009 indictment for war crimes by the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

In 2011, the Republic of South Sudan became independent, but the problems in Darfur and even among the Beja in the Red Sea area are not yet fully resolved. With the loss of the south, Sudan has less than one-quarter of its oil left because most of it is located inside the borders of South Sudan. Sudan has entered this new century still trying to recover from the effects of the Anglo–Egyptian occupation and other serious economic issues. In many ways, it still must decide on its identity.

**See also:** [Bahr al-Ghazal River](#); [Sennar](#); [Shilluk](#); [Sudd](#); [White Nile River](#).

*John A. Shoup*

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**IDI AMIN DADA (1928–2003)**

Idi Amin Dada was military dictator of Uganda between 1971 and 1979. He was a cruel and psychotic ruler who was responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths. Under his rule, civilian citizens were terrorized and the economy collapsed. He was eventually overthrown but left Uganda bankrupt and in shambles.

Idi Amin was born in approximately 1928 in West Nile Province in northwestern Uganda, then a British protectorate. He was a Muslim belonging to the Kakwa tribe, a small tribe with links to Sudan and Congo. As a child, he moved from place to place with his mother, who was rumored to be a witch. He received little education and struggled with reading and writing throughout his life. In 1946, he joined the King's African Rifles, a multibattalion regiment composed of men from various British possessions in Africa, and he became an ideal soldier rising rapidly in rank despite his lack of education. He not only demonstrated ability in the field but also a streak of cruelty. Amin was Uganda's heavyweight boxing champion in the 1950s and had several wives and a large number of children.

By the time Uganda became independent in 1962, Amin was one of only two commissioned officers in the country and had a loyal following among troops from his own Kakwa tribe as well as Sudanese soldiers he had recruited from southern Sudan with promises of helping their rebellion. Amin then became commander of the armed forces and right-hand man of new Prime Minister Milton Obote. While serving Obote, Amin sold arms to Congolese rebels, becoming wealthy from the enterprise. In a power struggle between Obote and the reigning Bugandan king, Sir Edward Mutesa II, Amin led an assault on the king's palace at Mengo Hill in Kampala, sending the king into exile and killing thousands of civilians. Amin's chance to seize power for himself came in January 1971 while Obote was in Singapore. Troops loyal to Amin took over

Kampala, and Amin declared a new government. Obote's ministers were arrested and brutally murdered, and troops loyal to Obote were massacred.

At first, Amin was popular in the capital, and many foreign nations were quick to recognize his government. Amin promised peace and reconciliation, but he soon turned Uganda into a military state, giving high positions to his Kakwa relatives and loyal Sudanese troops and making himself "Life President." He spent lavishly on himself and his associates, and government policy became whatever he wanted. He awarded himself medals and university degrees and had Lake Edward renamed "Lake Idi Amin." He even claimed to be the king of Scotland because he liked bagpipes and kilts. On the surface, Amin was amiable and friendly, but underneath he was sadistic and ruthless. As money began to run out, Amin abandoned his Western allies and turned to Libya and other Arab nations for support. He also took the disastrous step of expelling Uganda's wealthy Asian community of about 60,000 ethnic Indians and Pakistanis who had become a vital part of the country's trade and manufacturing economy. Their confiscated assets were given to Amin's military friends, who knew nothing about business. Severe shortages and high inflation followed, putting the economy in a tailspin. To keep control of mounting dissatisfaction, Amin turned increasingly to violence. Former ministers, army officers, and even students were abducted by Amin's security forces, and their bodies were later found on remote roadways. Anyone thought to be disloyal, mostly innocent civilians, could be arrested without warrant. Mass executions were common at the State Research Bureau, one of Amin's most ruthless security organizations. He also arrested and murdered an Anglican archbishop who had criticized him. Truckloads of bodies were said to be dumped in the Nile River, and some people accused Amin of cannibalism (Allen 2004, p. 41). Gunshots were frequently heard on the streets of Kampala, and people lived in fear.

Internationally, Amin saw himself as the leader of Africa against Western imperialism and supported extremist groups in Africa and the Middle East. In 1976, an airliner with many Israeli citizens on board was hijacked by the Palestinian Liberation Organization and flown to Entebbe Airport in Uganda. Amin gave the hijackers his full support and sent soldiers to guard the plane. An Israeli raid rescued the hostages and brought Amin international condemnation and humiliation. To divert attention from his failing government, Amin ordered an invasion of neighboring Tanzania. Aided by Ugandan exiles, Tanzanian forces repelled the invaders and entered Uganda, reaching Kampala in April 1979. Amin fled the country, first to Libya and then to Saudi Arabia, where he

died in 2003. He never answered for his crimes.

**See also:** [Buganda](#); [Kampala](#).

*Geri Shaw*

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## ISLAM ON THE NILE

Since ancient times, religion has been of great significance to Egypt, and Egypt in turn has held great significance to several of the world's religions. Today, more than 90 percent of Egyptians are Muslim, and Islam has been the dominant religion of Egypt for well over 1,000 years. Islam has thrived there, giving rise to such centers of Muslim scholarship as the great al-Azhar University and to some of the Muslim world's most celebrated scholars. Although Egypt today is almost entirely Muslim, it has not always been so. The religion of the country, in fact, has been decided largely by the political leadership of the state. Before Islam, Coptic Christianity was the dominant faith system, and before that were the religions of the pharaonic and Hellenistic dynasties. Furthermore, since antiquity, Egypt itself has been recognized as a symbol of cultural greatness. Such empires as the Greeks, Hittites, Persians, and Romans sought to dominate Egypt, believing that the possession or incorporation of Egypt into their own states would serve to elevate the worth and prestige of their own empires. As a result, since the time of Alexander the Great up to the Ottomans, Egypt was subject to one conquest after another, which brought with it religious shifts and upheavals. Even in terms of its Islamic orientation, Egypt underwent profound doctrinal shifts from its original Sunni rulers (seventh to 10th century CE) to a major center of Shi'ism under the Fatimids (10th–12th century CE) and again to a Sunni stronghold from the Ayyubids (12th century CE) to the present day.



**A hajj painting on the outside of a house in Gurna, near Luxor, shows at least one of the residents in the home has been to Mecca. The painting is a public display of the owner's piety and personal pride in having been to Mecca. (John A. Shoup)**

Prior to the arrival of Islam in 642, Egypt was under Byzantine rule, and the majority of the population was not Orthodox but Egyptian Coptic Christian. According to tradition, Christianity had arrived in Egypt with Saint Mark the Evangelist in the first century CE and took root despite initial Roman persecution. In Upper Egypt, some regions maintained pre-Christian practices, and small Jewish communities continued to prosper in the major urban centers, yet the dominant faith system was Christianity, which enjoyed the patronage of the Byzantine state. The state, however, had suffered several serious setbacks. In the early seventh century, however, the Byzantines suffered a loss of power as the Sassanid Persians launched a successful three-year campaign into Egypt. While the Byzantines were able to reassert control of Egypt in 622, the loss of imperial power was a definite blow to the region's military stability, which in turn facilitated the Arab invasion that followed shortly after in 639 CE.

When the Prophet Muhammad died in 632, Islam was already the dominant religion of the Arabian Peninsula, and it expanded energetically over the next three decades under the *Rashidun* (or rightly guided) *Khulafa'* (caliphs) (632–661). Islam itself had evolved at the nexus between three great cultures: Egypt, Byzantium, and Sassanid Persia. Furthermore, Islam had appeared at a crucial point in history because the Byzantines and Sassanids had exhausted their economies in what amounted to a military stalemate. Islamic traditions hold that it was a priority for the Prophet Muhammad to invite the leaders of these states

to convert to Islam. As they refused, it devolved to the caliphs to conquer those states by force and thus add their social, intellectual, and economic capital to the fledgling Islamic state.

As Egypt was the nearest of the three states to the Arabian Peninsula, it presented a sound target for expansion. As a Byzantine province, it did not have the same military defenses as Constantinople itself, and the state itself had only recently recovered from its Sassanid occupation. Nevertheless, it took three years for the Muslims to take Egypt, with the capital Alexandria falling as one of the final strongholds in 641 CE.

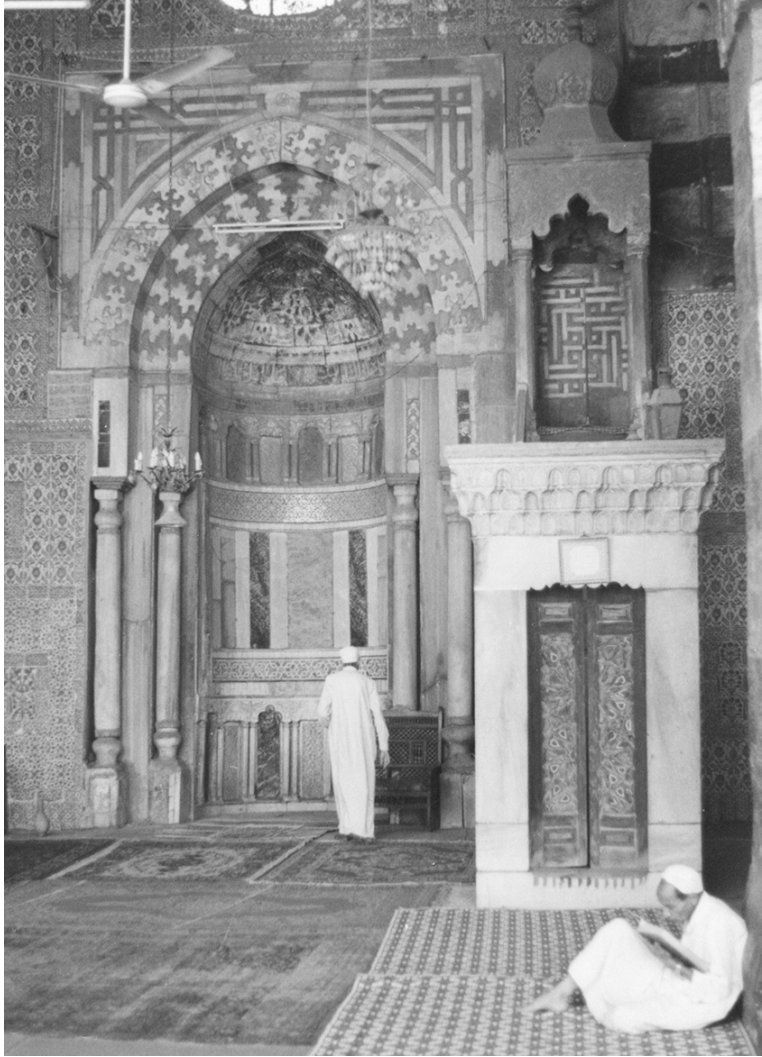
As the Arab Muslims secured their control over Egypt, they carried out the Koranic injunction in dealing with the native Egyptians. Conquered citizens were given three choices: convert to Islam, pay tribute (*jizya* in Arabic), or die as enemies of the state. Note that these terms were not dissimilar to the choices any ancient or medieval state gave conquered citizenries, and Egyptians were already paying tribute to Constantinople, so the establishment of the *jizya* would have been seen as a continuation of an existing practice rather than a new expense. Although some Egyptians converted to Islam, the majority of citizens initially maintained the Christian faith, and their payment of tribute meant that the Muslim rulers were now responsible for their protection and general well-being. In subsequent centuries, widespread conversion to Islam took place, yet the Muslim rulers took pains to maintain the churches and religious rights of the Copts.

Since the coming of Islam into Egypt in the mid-seventh century, most of its dynasties (Ayyubids, Mamalik, and Ottomans) were Sunni; the lone exception was the Fatimids. As Egypt itself underwent several periods of religion (pharaonic, Hellenistic, and Christian) before the coming of Islam and possessed cultural and intellectual sophistication, it is no surprise that the Islam that took shape in Egypt was culturally powerful and intellectually rigorous.

## Egypt in Islam

Egypt has the distinction of being one of the few nations mentioned in the Koran, most noticeably in *Surat Yusuf* (or “Chapter of Joseph”), which centers on the biblical adventures of the prophet Joseph. In fact, because *Surat Yusuf* is the only chapter of the Koran dedicated to a comprehensive narrative, Egypt receives considerably more attention than other empires of that period. Furthermore, the Koran also gives a place of importance to Moses as a major prophet of Islam, and thus his struggles in Egypt to liberate the children of Israel (*Bani Isra’il* in Arabic) from the pharaoh are important to the Koranic narrative. Likewise, the pyramids and temples of the Old and Middle Kingdoms provided ample evidence of the Koran’s veracity in describing ancient Egypt as a great empire. Both Jewish and Koranic tradition also hold that Abraham’s son Isma’il was half-Egyptian through his mother, Hajar. So, according to Islamic tradition, the Arab people and the Prophet Muhammad are of distant Egyptian descent.





The *mihrab*, or prayer niche, and *minbar*, or pulpit, at the Aq Sunqur Mosque, built originally in 1347. In 1652 Ibrahim Mustahfizan added blue tiles typical of Ottoman mosques. (John A. Shoup)

As a religion, Islam holds that education and literacy are integral to humanity. This is reinforced by the repetition of the divine command *Iqra!* (Arabic for “read”) within the historical first verses of the Koran and by the repeated references to God’s revelations as “books,” with references to Jews and Christians as “People of the Book.” Thus, the acquisition, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge was an early priority for the early Muslim community, especially during the period of the Rashidun caliphs. This being the case, the military conquest of Egypt and Persia was a great boon for the young Muslim community, as each state had a literate clerical class, libraries, and an educational system. Hellenistic Egypt in particular had centuries of experience with provincial administration, agriculture, engineering, arts, and sciences. As Islam began to spread within Egypt and the upper classes began to adopt Islam as their religion, the knowledge and educational resources of the Egyptians considerably reinforced the knowledge of the Muslim ‘*ulama*’ (religious scholars). Where religious scholars in Mecca and Medina would have focused almost entirely on purely religious knowledge (they had access to little else), the Egyptian ‘*ulama*’ were faced with a wealth of subjects (such as medicine and mathematics) about which an educated person should have some knowledge. This being the case, it is no surprise that around 970 CE the Fatimid rulers of Egypt endowed al-Azhar University in the newly founded city of Cairo. In other words, the state created a physical site and financial backing to bring together a faculty of eminent scholars so they might train generations of qualified young religious leaders from Egypt and abroad. Further, by hosting a center that would train religious scholars, al-Azhar had no competition in the same region. This move proved to be wise, and despite al-Azhar’s Shi’ite origins, the university remains today the prominent educational institution of the Sunni world, and the shaykh of al-Azhar has traditionally been extremely influential in Islam within Egypt as well as in the international Muslim community. Today, al-Azhar University continues to train students from across the globe, and its faculties now offer degrees that include similar disciplines as those taught at any other contemporary university, including medicine, education, and literature. The form of Islam taught by al-Azhar is held to be orthodox and is promoted as such by the Egyptian state.

## Sufism and Folk Islam

Sufism is the mystical tradition of Islam, and ever since the medieval period it has proven to be a powerful spiritual and political force in almost every Muslim state. Although Islam may have initially had a series of ascetic spiritual disciplines, they were not collected and codified until centuries after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Although there is little evidence of any independent Egyptian Sufism in the pre-Fatimid period, prominent Sufi orders began to appear in Egypt after the Fatimids and flourished in Egypt and elsewhere during the Mamluk period (13th–16th centuries CE). That being said, for centuries Egypt was home to Christian ascetics and monastics, and thus mystical spirituality was well established, so some Muslims may have adopted some of the ascetic practices of the Coptic Christians. Sufism remains especially popular with young adults, though most of its adherents are males, as many of the *turuq* (singular of *tariqah* or pathway) do not encourage female members.

Because of its rich pre-Islamic history, Egypt has strong folk traditions that have become part of its own unique form of Islam. Although this is sometimes characterized by religious leaders as a rural phenomenon, this is not the case, and many educated people will make use of decorative motifs for good fortune such as the evil eye or hand of Fatimah. Other folk traditions may be more obvious, and some rural areas especially in the south of the country continue festivals and religious practices that date back to the Hellenistic or Middle Kingdom periods. Other traditions are oral tales and legends, which are quite popular in Egypt and can be found today online and in print.

Since the establishment of Islam as the state religion in the seventh century, Islamic law has been the basis of the legal system. Sunni Islam has four primary scholars of Islamic law—Hanbali, Hanafi, Maliki, and Shafa'i—and Egypt today adheres to the Shafa 'i school, although it recognizes the other schools as legitimate. Since its founding, al-Azhar University has been an important center for the teaching and research of Islamic law, and it is possible to pursue a doctoral degree in all four schools of Islamic law at al-Azhar. Equally significant is the existence of Egypt's Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Wizarat al-Awqaf*), which is responsible for developing and overseeing Islamic law throughout the entire country in coordination with the Ministry of Justice. Religious law in Egypt has both progressive and conservative elements. On the one hand, Egypt allows for much freedom in the personal lives of its citizens, and the popular culture in Egypt is not subject to the rigid laws of countries such as Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, many leading jurists maintain strong support for medieval religious rulings that other contemporary Muslim scholars believe should be abolished such as the harsh penalties for apostasy and marital infidelity. Overall, Islam in Egypt is characterized for being relatively forward-thinking.

**See also:** [Coptic Christianity](#); [Judaism on the Nile](#); [Sufism and Sufi Brotherhoods](#).

*Connell Monette*

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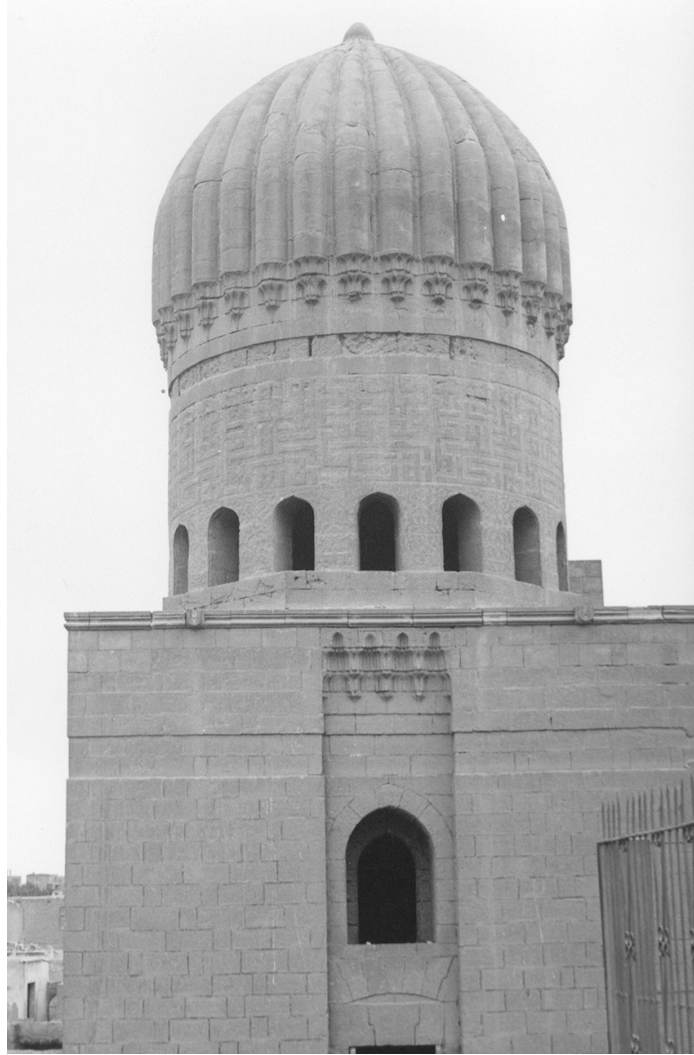
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## ISLAMIC MONUMENTS

Islamic monuments in the form of mosques, tombs, shrines, markets, gates and city walls, madrasahs or Islamic schools, and other types of major buildings are found from Alexandria to Kampala. Because of its importance in Arab and Islamic history, the city of Cairo contains some of the best known examples and is rivaled only by Istanbul in the number of individual monuments. Cairo has been called "the city of one thousand minarets," although in reality it may have more (Feeney 1985). Cairo also contains monuments from nearly every time period from Islam's beginning decades to the present, so it also provides the rich living history of the development of Islamic architecture. Rather than concentrate on individual monuments, this essay will discuss the various types of architecture found along the Nile.

## Mosques

Mosques are places for Muslims to pray, and there are two main types: a small neighborhood mosque called a *masjid*, which is not meant to hold a large number of people; and a large Friday mosque called a *jami'* that is meant to hold the whole community for the main noon prayer on Fridays. A *masjid* does not need to have a minaret or even be a separate building, so it can make use of an apartment building's basement. The larger *jami'*, on the other hand, were built to accommodate large numbers of worshipers. In a land with few trees for construction, especially for roofs, the large size had to consider the available architectural materials. In most of Egypt and Sudan, limestone and adobe have been the best alternatives. While Egypt's ruling dynasties built massive mosques in cut limestone, Sudan's Muslim dynasties continued to build in adobe or uncut stone. Regardless of the size of their mosques, today many towns and villages up and down the Nile are equipped with loudspeakers to announce the day's prayers.



**The dome of the Sultaniyah Mausoleum built in the 14th century, perhaps for the mother of Sultan Hasan. It demonstrates the development of ribbed domes. (John A. Shoup)**

For large mosques, the main architectural type remains that of the original mosque in Medina built by the Prophet: a hypostyle prayer hall (that is, a roof resting on columns) and a large outdoor courtyard (Frishman and Hassan-Uddin 1994, p. 13). This model was improved on by Umayyad *Khalifah* Walid I (ruled 705–715) when he rebuilt the Byzantine church of St. John the Baptist as the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. In Egypt, the Muslim commander ‘Amr ibn al-‘As built the first mosque in Africa in his newly constructed town of al-Fustat located outside the walls of the Byzantine fortress of Babylon. The early mosques were enlarged and rebuilt, and little remains of the originals. Most of the buildings before the Fatamid period (969–1171) have almost nothing left standing today. The Mosque of ibn Tulun (built 876–879) is one of the



exceptions. Even though it has been restored several times, most of the original is still standing today, possibly because of its immense size of 6.5 acres (2.6 hectares) (Parker *et al.* 1985, p. 64). It was built large enough to allow the entire army to pray in it at one time.

The minaret is the most striking element in the historical development of mosques. The oldest along the Nile River are not tall and are described as looking like a salt shaker with a rounded top; in Arabic, it is known as a *mabkharah* or incense burner because of its shape. These older minarets date from the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods and were a development of the older square minarets developed from Christian bell towers in Syria. The most elaborate styles were developed by the Mamalik, who patronized architecture as part of their public display of power. Of Central Asian and Caucasus origins, the Mamalik were familiar with the brick and stone styles of Iran and Anatolia. They developed the octagon from the square, adding narrow elegance to the form and allowing it to compete with the tall and elegant brick and tile minarets of Iran and Anatolia. They added decorative motifs in cut stone and tile, and with the height they were able to add balconies that helped stabilize the structure. Later in both the histories of Egypt and Sudan, the Mamluk revival became the official style of the state. In Egypt, this was done to demonstrate independence from the Ottomans. Ironically, the mosque chosen as the emblem of the city of Cairo is the massive central dome style of the Mosque of Muhammad ‘Ali (built between 1824–1848). It is fully Ottoman in design and was an attempt to rival the monumental mosques of the imperial capital. Only Egypt has Ottoman-style mosques; areas south along the river kept their local styles until the modern era.



**The ibn Tulun mosque was built between 876 and 879 in an unusual style inspired by Samarah in**

Iraq. (Francisco Javier Gil [Oreja/Dreamstime.com](#))

In Uganda, mosque designs are either of the Swahili traditions based on those of Oman and Yemen rather than Syria and Egypt or on those of the Indian subcontinent. In the Swahili tradition, mosques are not grand structures but usually blend in with the surrounding streets. They often have large but low windows that allow breezes to cool the inside. Along the coast, they are frequently made from rock coral, but inland builders make use of whatever is the most handy material, including wood. Minarets are built as if they were mud brick with wide, sturdy bottoms that narrow toward the top. Tops can be rounded as they are in the Arabian Gulf or pointed. The style from India has a main entrance gate with double minarets with onion-shaped tops (the minarets can be short or tall and thin), and the dome over the prayer hall is also onion-shaped.



**The Madrasah of Sultan Hasan (built between 1356–1363) is one of the most impressive of Mamluk buildings. It once served as a middle-level school for training Islamic scholars. (John A. Shoup)**

Sufism or mystical Islam have buildings in which mystics meet, teach, learn, and hold ceremonies. Various types of buildings have a wide variety of names; a *khanqah*, for example, is a place where Sufis can be housed and study with a master. The term *khanqah* arose in Iran, where the first such institutions were built during the Great Saljuq period (1040–1194). Other names associated with this institution are the Arabic *zawiyah* and the Turkish *tekke*.

The *khanqah* was part of the Sunni revival of the 11th century. During the ninth and 10th centuries, Shi‘ism, and in particular the Isma‘ili branch, grew in popularity among Muslims from Morocco to Iran. In the 10th century, the Isma‘ili Fatamids established a rival *Khilafah* (caliphate), conquering Egypt in 969 and establishing their capital as Cairo. The arrival of the Sunni Saljuq Turks from Central Asia in Iran and later Iraq ended Shi‘ite control of the ‘Abbasid caliphs when the Buyids (932–1062) were defeated and forced to leave Baghdad in 1055.

The Sunni revival needed to teach not only the average Muslim but also the religious elite in the four schools of Sunni legal thought. To do this, the Saljuqs built the first madrasah in Iran. As middle-level schools, madrasahs produced Muslim scholars who could fill low-to medium-level positions in government. With the spread of the Sunni revival in the Middle East and North Africa, madrasahs developed into large buildings that also housed and fed students. The usual design of a madrasah was cruciform with a central courtyard with four side alcoves called *iwan*. In addition to the need for teaching space in the *iwan*, each dedicated to a specific school of legal thought, there was a prayer space with a minaret. A second floor provided sleeping rooms for students and a kitchen and toilets were found on the ground floor. The Zangids (1127–1251) and the Ayyubids (1071–1260) expanded the number of madrasahs in Syria and Egypt. This policy was continued by the Mamalik (1260–1517), who endowed them throughout the territories they controlled. The most brilliant of students would then attend the university or *jami‘yah* connected to a major Friday mosque such as al-Azhar University in Cairo, which remains the most prestigious of Sunni universities.

In Egypt, primary Islamic education was carried out in the mosque or in a special school called a *kuttab*. During the Ottoman era and into the early decades of Muhammad ‘Ali’s rule, these were frequently combined with public water fountains or *sabil*. The *sabil-kuttab* became a regular institution in Egyptian

cities and was frequently endowed by leading women of the Egyptian court from the Mamluk period to modern times. The sabil-kuttab does not take up much space along the street because it is a lower section for the fountain and an upper floor for the school.

## Mausoleums

The mausoleum is another important type of Islamic monument. The Mamalik built them for themselves and their families as well as for major religious figures. The mausoleums for members of the ruling elite tend to be located in Cairo or in major urban areas, but those for religious figures range from large, important urban structures, such as for *Imam* Shafa 'i (built in 1211) in Cairo and that for Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi in Omdurman (built in 1885) to small, humble structures in most towns and villages along the Nile River from Alexandria to the Sudd in southern Sudan. In Egypt, the Turkish term *turbe* is generally used for those for the ruling elite, whereas the Arabic term *dharih* is used for the religious figures.

The Mamalik built extravagant tombs, and the central domes became more decorative as the decades passed with stone carvings such as ribbing, seven to 12 pointed stars, interlinking arabesques of floral designs, and Arabic calligraphy or use of colored tiles. The central domes became elongated almost to the point of being minarets, such as that of Yunus al-Dawadar (built in 1382) and that of the *khanqah* mausoleum of al-Sultaniyah (built in 1350) that reflect the styles of Central Asia of Timur (Tamerlane) (Behrens-Abousief 2007, p. 121).

## **Mamalik**

The term *Mamluk* in Arabic means “owned,” and the *Mamalik* (plural of *Mamluk*) were slaves who were given special training in the military arts, reading, and writing. They were usually purchased as young boys and raised in the service of their commander, for whom they had strong loyalty. The Mamluk system was an old practice in the Middle East and in the ‘Abbasid period (750–1258), replacing less reliable tribal levies and citizen militias. Initially, the Mamalik served as a professional core of the army, with militias providing the majority of the soldiers. In the reign of al-Mu‘tasim (833–842), however, heavy dependence on Turkish Mamalik became common. Egypt was ruled by several local dynasties of Turkish and Circassian Mamluk origin: the Tulunids (868–905), the Ikhshidids (935–969), the Bahri (1250–1382), and the Burji (1382–1517).

The Bahri and Burji Mamalik (1250–1517) built some of the most spectacular buildings in Cairo, making it a living museum of Islamic art and architecture. Most of the Mamalik felt they needed to legitimize their rule, which they did by building Islamic monuments. They developed a particular style that combined elements of Turkish and Persian architecture and arts with Syria and Egypt. Architectural features that had been built in brick were translated into stone. The Mamalik used the Syrian idea of different colors of stone in alternating layers and developed new minarets with eight sides as well as domes with delicate carved decorations.

## Caravanserais and Markets

*Caravanserai* means a place that provides housing and food for travelers and merchants. When located in urban centers, they also allowed merchants from other cities or countries the right to sell their merchandise directly to the public. In Egypt, the Arabic term *wikalah* is usually used, and the buildings are large squares or rectangles with several floors: upper floors with rooms for sleeping and a ground floor that provides stabling for animals, places to display and sell wares, and a kitchen and toilets. Several caravanserai in Cairo are famous from the Mamluk times such as the Khan al-Khalili (built in 1382) for foreign merchants (Parker *et al.* 1985, p. 190).



## Fortifications

Fortifications include city walls, gates, and citadels. Most of the cities along the Nile River had walls; one exception was al-Fustat, which never had walls. Cairo's cut stone walls were built in 1087 by the *wazir* or chief minister, Badr al-Jamali, to replace the original mud brick walls. He brought architects from Byzantium and northern Syria who employed Anatolian designs and decorated the gates with representations of shields, round Arab and Norman kite-shaped, to indicate the conquered armies. Cairo's walls were extended by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (ruled 1169–1193) and by the Mamalik. The Citadel became the home of the Burji Mamalik (1382–1517), replacing the barracks on Roda Island that had served as the base for the Bahri Mamalik (1250–1382). The Citadel remained the center of government until Muhammad 'Ali built the al-Gawharah (Jewel Palace) in 1814 to replace the Mamluk al-Ablaq (Stripped Palace). In 1874, the Khadawi and his family moved to 'Abdin Palace near central Cairo.

Many cities in the Nile River delta, including Alexandria, were given special attention by the Mamalik, perhaps as a result of the two crusades: the Fifth (1218–1221) and the Seventh (1249–1250). Mamalik reinforced city walls and built citadels, perhaps the best example being the Qaytbay in Alexandria built in 1477 (Schubert 2001, p. 192). Sultan Qaytbay (ruled 1468–1496) also had a similar forts built to protect the ports of Rosetta and Tripoli (Lebanon).

## The Nilometer and Aqueduct

The nilometer is an instrument used to measure the height of Nile River flooding and has typically been connected with agricultural production and taxes for the state. Several nilometers have been built over the centuries, and the one built by the ancient Egyptians in Aswan still stands. In Cairo, the ‘Abbasid *Khalifah* al-Ma’mun (786–833) or al-Mutawakkil (847–861) ordered one to be built on the southern tip of the Roda Island. It is the oldest Islamic monument still standing in its original form. In the Mamluk era, the dome was renovated.

The aqueduct brought Nile water to the Citadel using several waterwheels that raised the water by stages from the level of the river to the fortification. The course of the aqueduct was three kilometers or slightly more than one mile in length. During the Mamluk period, the original aqueduct of Salah al-Din was expanded to provide drinking water for men and horses and water to irrigate crops. It was repaired by the Ottomans and was in use until the French occupation of Egypt. Then the stone towers where the waterwheels were located were turned into bastions, and even some of the arches supporting the aqueduct were blocked up.

**See also:** [Coptic Christianity](#); [Coptic Churches and Monasteries](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Islam on the Nile](#).

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## ISLAMIC MUSEUM

The Islamic Museum in Cairo has one of the world's largest collections of Islamic art from the Umayyad period (661–750 CE) to the 19th century. The museum was founded by Julius Franz, an Austrian, who headed the technical department in the Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Endowments). In 1880, Khedive Tawfiq (1878–1892) allowed the building of a museum for Arab arts. In 1881, the site of the Fatimid (909–1171) Al-Hakim Mosque, then in ruins, was used to house the first collection of 111 architectural pieces (Asker 2006, p. 1). A special gallery was built in the mosque to house the pieces.

Khedive Tawfiq authorized a Comité de Conservation des Monuments des Arts Arabs that also oversaw the affairs of the museum. The museum quickly became overstuffed. In 1887, another Austrian, Max Herz, replaced Franz as head of the museum. Herz had been the architect for the Ministry of Awqaf, and he changed the name of the museum to *Dar al-Athar al-'Arabiyyah* ("Gallery of

Arab Antiquities”). In 1895, Herz wrote the first guide book for the collection, which then numbered 1,641 artifacts (Asker 2006, p. 1).

The building became overcrowded with too many objects for the space, so a larger, two-storied building was begun at Bab al-Khalq in 1899. The structure was built by the Italian architect Alfonso Manescalo in neo-Mamluk style and was opened to the public in 1902. It was originally designed to house the National Library on the second floor and the museum on the ground floor. The museum grew with the donations of private collections, including that of the mother of Khedive ‘Abbas II Hilmi (1892–1914) and those of Prince Yusuf Kamal Ya‘qub Artin.

The museum’s collection was also enhanced by artifacts from Islamic sites excavated in Cairo and Upper Egypt between 1910 and 1925. In 1925, the museum had its first Egyptian director, but when he died two years later the museum was placed under the direction of French scholar Gaston Wiet; he remained director until 1951 when he returned to France (Askar 2006, p. 4). Wiet expanded the collection to include a wide range of objects, including items from outside the Arab world. By 1952, the number of artifacts reached 16,524. In 1952, the Egyptian Zaki Hasan took control of the museum, and he had the collection rearranged chronologically from the seventh century to the 19th century and covering Spain to Central Asia. He also changed the official name to the Museum of Islamic Art.

In subsequent years, the museum grew as more objects were found in Cairo’s old city, including two jars filled with gold coins from the Burji Mamluk period (1382–1517). In 2010, the museum was reopened after being closed for extensive renovation; in 2014, however, the museum was damaged by a car bomb meant for the police station across the street. The building suffered extensive damage, and repairs were estimated to be around \$20 million U.S.

**See also:** [Islam on the Nile](#); [Islamic Monuments](#).

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# J

## **JAMAL ‘ABD AL-NASIR (GAMAL ABDEL NASSER) (1918–1970)**

Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir (also spelled Gamal Abdel Nasser) was one of the most important and influential men in modern Egyptian history. He was born in 1918 near Alexandria, son of ‘Abd al-Nasir Husayn (Hussein) and Fahima. Because his father was a postal worker, the family moved often to live wherever his father was stationed. Before ‘Abd al-Nasir graduated from primary school, his family had lived in Alexandria, Asyut, Khatatbah, and Alexandria again. His parents were major influences on his life and thoughts, especially about Arab nationalism. During the family’s second stay in Alexandria, ‘Abd al-Nasir was drawn into the political protests against Britain’s insistence that Egypt’s 1923 constitution be suspended.

In 1933, ‘Abd al-Nasir’s father was transferred to Cairo, and Jamal entered the Nahdah Masriyyah School. He remained an activist, and in 1935 led a student demonstration against the suspension of the 1923 constitution and against the continued presence of the British in Egypt. During the demonstration, ‘Abd al-Nasir was wounded; for the first time, his name was mentioned in the Egyptian press.

In 1937, he applied for admission to the Egyptian Military Academy, but his police record barred his acceptance. He then applied to King Fuad University (now Cairo University) but soon dropped out and reapplied for the military academy. This time he was accepted. He was already an avid reader, having started using the National Library in 1933; there he not only read the Koran and the lives of the companions of the Prophet but also biographies of leaders such as Napoleon, Atatürk, and Giribaldi. He also read the literary works of Ahmad Shawqi and Tawfiq al-Hakim.

During his time at the academy, he met the two men who would become his closest aids: ‘Abd al-Hakim ‘Amr and Anwar al-Sadat. The three graduated together and shared their first posting as officers together. It was at their first

post that they began discussing their dissatisfaction with the corruption of the government and the need to overthrow it. ‘Abd al-Nasir had two postings in Sudan, and in 1943 he secured the post of instructor at the Military Academy in Cairo. In 1942, British Ambassador Miles Lampson demanded the dismissal of Egyptian Prime Minister Husayn Sirri Pasha because he was thought to be “sympathetic” to the Axis powers. ‘Abd al-Nasir was ashamed the Egyptian army allowed this to happen. He began to form a group of disgruntled young officers who had similar nationalistic feelings, and ‘Abd al-Hakim ‘Amr maintained close contact with them all.

The 1948 Arab–Israeli War was pivotal for ‘Abd al-Nasir. The Egyptian troops were unprepared and poorly armed for the war. ‘Abd al-Nasir’s troops occupied the Palestinian village of al-Falujah; despite poor equipment and a lack of reinforcements, they endured bombardment and refused to surrender. They did not hand over the village to the Israelis until 1949 and the end of the negotiations that left Egypt in charge of Gaza. On their return to Cairo, singer and actress Umm Kulthum hosted the men and officers to a party to honor their courage, an event that began a close friendship between ‘Abd al-Nasir and the singer.

Following his return to Cairo, ‘Abd al-Nasir returned to his position as an instructor at the military academy and sent a message contacting the Muslim Brotherhood, but he soon decided the religious agenda of the group did not match his nationalist ideals. The coup of Husni al-Za‘im in Syria encouraged ‘Abd al-Nasir, and he began plotting the 1952 coup. Gaining the support of General Muhammad Najib (Nagib), the coup used an incident in which 40 Egyptian policemen were killed by British troops in Isma‘iliyyah as the pretext for action. The coup toppled King Faruq, and General Najib was the leader for the first year after the coup, even though ‘Abd al-Nasir pulled the strings behind the scenes.

In 1954, ‘Abd al-Nasir removed Najib and took over the country as head of the Revolutionary Command Council. In the same year, there was an attempted assassination on ‘Abd al-Nasir; as a result, Communists, officers loyal to Najib, and leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were arrested and executed. In 1955, he joined the Bandung Conference, a meeting of nonaligned national leaders, including Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia and Jawaharlal Nehru of India. He then established himself as president of Egypt in the 1956 constitution and election. ‘Abd al-Nasir wanted to modernize the country and thought the High Dam at Aswan would provide water to expand irrigation and electricity to expand

manufacturing. He sought financial aid from the United States and Britain. He also embarked on agricultural reforms to more evenly distribute land among the peasants. He moved forward on his ideas to nationalize major parts of the economy, and in 1956 he nationalized the Suez Canal in order to pay for the Aswan High Dam once both Britain and the United States backed down from promises of loans because Egypt bought arms from the Soviet Union following Israel's purchase of arms from France. Nationalization of the canal led the British and French to retaliate. Joined by Israel, the three powers met stiff resistance, and eventually the Americans and Soviets forced them to withdraw and accept Egyptian control.

The Arab world was thrilled with 'Abd al-Nasir, and the ideal of Arab nationalism spread throughout most Arab states. In 1958, Syria appealed to 'Abd al-Nasir for unity, and briefly the two became the United Arab Republic. By 1960, the reforms Egypt tried to enforce on Syria not only failed there but also alienated the Syrian people. In 1961, the union collapsed entirely.

Nonetheless, 'Abd al-Nasir remained popular in the Arab world through his rousing speeches. In 1962, Algeria gained its independence from France, and 'Abd al-Nasir saw this as his victory because of the support Egypt had provided the Algerians. Coups in Iraq and Syria brought in Nasirists, and the monarchy was overthrown in Yemen. He seemed to be riding on a wave of popular support, although he had rivals in the Arab world. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba, and King Hassan II of Morocco all were against 'Abd al-Nasir's pan-Arab policies for a variety of reasons.

Two things caused the slow end of pan-Arabism: the unresolved issue of Palestine and a war in Yemen. The war in Yemen saw Saudi Arabia and Egypt on opposite sides. The war lasted from 1962 to 1970, with the republicans backed by Egypt eventually winning but at a huge cost to Egypt. In 1967, a second Arab-Israeli war was fought, and the Arab armies lost on a large scale. The Egyptians tried to close the Suez to Israeli shipping and, in a lightning-quick preventive strike, the Israeli air force destroyed most of Egypt's air force on the ground. The war lost the Sinai for Egypt, the West Bank for Jordan, and the Jawlan (Golan) Heights for Syria. 'Abd al-Nasir went on Egyptian television and took full blame for the defeat and resigned from office. Public outcry, however, was so strong against his resignation that he had to withdraw it.

In 1968, a war of attrition began that would last until the third Arab-Israeli war—the October War—in 1973, but the Palestinian issue remained unsolved. In 1968, Palestinian commandos were able to turn back a heavily armed Israeli



army attack on the refugee camp at Karamah in the Jordan Valley. The Jordanian military provided artillery fire, but most of the fighting was done by Palestinians. This was the first defeat the Israelis suffered and greatly boosted Palestinian morale. As a result, tensions grew in Jordan between the Palestinians and the army, and in 1970 the Jordanian army struck back after Palestinians hijacked three international airliners. ‘Abd al-Nasir called a summit of Arab leaders to deal with the crisis in Jordan and died of a heart attack soon after the last leader left the conference. His funeral was attended by 5 million mourners.

‘Abd al-Nasir left a major legacy to Egypt. It was under him that the Aswan High Dam was begun. He instituted land reform that gave Egypt’s peasants their own land, and he nationalized major companies and improved health and educational services. He assisted several Arab states gain independence from colonial powers and made Egypt a power not only in the Arab world but also in Africa by joining the Organization of African Unity and the NonAligned Movement. Often vilified today, he was one of the most important leaders in Egyptian history.

**See also:** [Aswan Dam, Low and High](#); [Cairo](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat](#).

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## JINJA, RIPON FALLS, AND OWEN FALLS DAM

Jinja is a town on Lake Victoria located some 80 kilometers (50 miles) east-northeast from Kampala, the capital of Uganda. It is near where the Victoria Nile leaves Lake Victoria and a short distance from Ripon Falls and the Owen Falls Dam. Of its nearly 73,000 people, most are engaged in subsistence agriculture and fishing and are classified by the Ugandan government as working poor. Since the building of the Owen Falls Dam, the population has risen to staff the dam's electricity works. In addition, a sugar factory refines sugar from cane. Jinja is also the headquarters of the Nile Beer Company, which was founded in the 1950s and sold to a South African company in 2001. Other activities include a palm oil refinery and a Kiira car factory that is in the initial building stages but should start operation in 2018.

Jinja marks the place where British explorer John Hanning Speke first saw where the Nile River leaves Lake Victoria (technically, it is the Victoria Nile; the White Nile then becomes the Albert Nile and *Bahr al-Jabal* River before becoming the White Nile in southern Sudan). The dam has greatly changed the nature of the place (Jeal 2011, p. 167). A plaque that once commemorated Speke's achievement is now under the waters of the dam, which have submerged Ripon Falls and backed up water into Lake Victoria. The dam was begun in 1947 by the British and completed in 1954. During the Suez Crisis, England thought about turning off the flow of the Nile from the dam to force al-Nasir to return the Suez Canal to Great Britain, but better minds prevailed and this was never done. Egypt had paid for part of the dam's construction costs, and its interests in the water were secured by international treaty. The amount of water

the dam would release was the same as the normal flow before the dam was built (Wanyera 2012). The dam was renamed the Nalubaale, the original Luganda name for the falls, after Uganda became independent in 1962. The block on the Nile caused by Ripon Falls, which forced the entire Nile through a small gorge, is followed by more such drops. The Nile flows on through Owen Falls only a few miles farther on and then meets Bujagali Falls (Twigger 2013, p. 33). This series of short falls are more like rapids rather than more usual falls of greater height. The Nile's flow was controlled naturally out of the lake with many large boulders across the channel.

The Owen Falls Dam raised the level of the Nile and Lake Victoria by nearly one meter (three feet) (Twigger 2013, p. 36). The dam is less than one kilometer (one-half mile) long, but it has six sluice gates, each with a generator that produces a good amount of the electricity for Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. The dam was expanded and repaired several times in the past, mainly in 1993. Work was finished in 2000, but the dam continues to spring leaks, and at age 61 its useful life is nearly over. Author Robert Twigger notes that cement construction in tropical climates does not age well. The new Bujagali Falls Dam will most likely submerge the older dam as the waters back up behind it. Work on this dam began in 2011, and the stretch of river behind the dam has already begun to smooth out and the rapids that had been an important tourist attraction are already gone. The dam is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

**See also:** [Bujagali Falls](#); [Lake Victoria](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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## JONGLEI CANAL

The Jonglei Canal was proposed as early as 1907 by the British to bypass the Sudd swamp and bring water from the Bahr al-Jabal (the Albert Nile) to the White Nile. Originally, the idea of the canal was to increase Egypt's agricultural production by expanding the area under cultivation by 2 million acres (800,9,371 hectares). The water flow north would increase by an estimated five to seven times its 1907 rate. No consideration was given to how the water loss from the Sudd would affect life there, both natural wildlife (plants and animals) and human life. In the 1930s, the plan was advanced, and in 1946 Egypt studied the idea (Sudan was then part of Egypt). A plan was produced between 1952 and 1959, but by that time Egypt was independent from Britain and Sudan had declared its own independence from both Britain and Egypt in 1956. Nonetheless, the scheme to divert the waters and establish a direct path to the White Nile was not abandoned.

Work on the canal began in 1978, but by 1984 the actions of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) had stopped work on the canal. The canal was seen as another attempt by the north to use the resources of the south for the benefit of the north only. The project was funded mostly by the Arab oil states and Kuwait had a major presence in Juba, the southern capital. The project became a point of conflict, and the huge digging machine being used was victim to a rocket attack and was left rusting where it was hit. Then the largest excavator in the world, "Lucy" had made progress on the canal until it was hit by rocket. When peace was restored in 2000, discussion on the canal was among the topics to be considered, but work on the canal did not resume. In 2008, the Sudanese government stated the canal was not a priority, but later the same year Sudan and Egypt began to reconsider the project. It was agreed that by 2032, the canal should be revived and the project finished.

In 2011, South Sudan became independent, and work on the canal has not restarted. The current civil war prevents this from happening, and the new government of South Sudan may not adopt the same stance about the canal as northern Sudan. Given the fact that the canal brings little advantage to the south, it is highly unlikely it would look favorably on the project. The impact it would have on the Sudd is grave: loss of grazing lands, a lower water table, the end of fisheries, and reduced rainfall, all of which make it unlikely South Sudan will ever revive the canal. The Sudd acts as the sponge for the Nile—that is, as a check on floodwaters from Central Africa—and it regulates the flow of the White Nile as it emerges from its numerous streams. The massive nature of the Sudd means its loss would cause a major environmental disaster in South Sudan.

**See also:** [Bahr al-Ghazal River](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Sudd](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## JUBA

Juba or Djuba is the capital of the new country known as South Sudan and of the Central Equatoria region. It replaced the older settlement of Gondokoro, capital of Equatorial Sudan under the Egyptians in the first decades of Anglo–Egyptian rule. It was replaced in the 1920s after the 1919–20 Dinka uprising. Juba was founded by Greek merchants supplying the British army in 1922. Greeks then numbered around 2,000 and contributed substantially to the building of the city's central business district as well as building hotels and the train station during the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the town was inhabited by local members of the Bari ethnic community.

Juba served as the venue for an agreement produced by the Juba Conference in 1947 whereby southern Sudan remained in Sudan rather than join Uganda. The policy put in place by British administrators before their evacuation separated the south from the north, required the use of English in schools rather than Arabic, and forbid northern merchants from doing business in the south. These and other discriminating practices did not prepare the south for integration into the north, and the Juba Convention should have been decided in favor of Uganda. Because the decision was for Juba to remain in Sudan, the south was totally unprepared for the strong Arabization process put in place after Sudanese independence in 1956. In fact, a rebellion began in 1955 when soldiers in Torit mutinied, which began the first Sudanese civil war that ended in 1972. During the civil wars that tore the country apart, Juba was frequently in the heart of the conflict. In 2011, the Republic of South Sudan was declared, and Juba became the capital and the largest settlement in the republic.

Nonetheless, Juba continued to develop, and the city became a hub for transportation by water, land, and air. Recently, efforts were made to connect

Juba with Uganda by rail. In 2014, the Juba International Airport opened with connections to Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and northern Sudan. The population growth is rapid (around 4 percent a year) and is now estimated at more than 370,000. It has an impressive infrastructure and now includes Juba University, which was established in 1977. Six other universities were established between 1991 and 2011 in South Sudan, but Juba is the oldest.

Juba Arabic developed as a result of Egyptian soldiers marrying local Bari women. The dialect mixes words from Bari and Arabic and creates a distinctive feature of the region. The current proposal to import Swahili from Kenya as the national language along with English (the official language) does not seem to be a good replacement for Arabic, a vestige of Egyptian and northern control, when Juba Arabic is spoken by so many (“Juba Arabic” n.d.). Because of the Nilotic peoples’ (Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk) long-standing dislike for each other, these languages are not possible as a national language nor are the Bantu languages such as Zande. South Sudan has 51 languages, and choosing any one of them would be a politically loaded endeavor. Juba Arabic seems to be a better choice, although politically it is not one the government seems willing to choose.

**See also:** [Dinka](#); [Gondokoro](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Nuer](#); [Shilluk](#).

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## JUDAISM ON THE NILE

Judaism is the oldest of the world’s Abrahamic religions and arguably one of the oldest monotheistic traditions in the world (alongside Zoroastrianism). In the historical traditions of Judaism, Egypt has played a critical role. The Torah states that Abraham and Sarah spent time there (Genesis 12), and it describes the greater part of the story of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 39–50). Perhaps most important is that the first 14 chapters of Exodus tell the story of Moses, one of the most important figures in Judaism and considered the greatest of the prophets. Although many of the events in the Torah are today considered mythic rather than historical, Egypt clearly plays an important role in the narrative and ritual traditions of the Jewish religion. Furthermore, since the Roman destruction of Judaea, Egypt has been home and refuge to a small Jewish community for almost 2,000 years, although that community has dwindled greatly since the 1960s.



## Genizah Documents

The Genizah documents are a collection of more than 300,000 Jewish texts that were found in the 19th century in a wall of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo. Most date between 870 and 1880. The Ben Ezra Synagogue was originally a Christian church, and the Coptic patriarch was forced to sell it to pay taxes in 882. Since the 12th century, the structure has been called the Ben Ezra Synagogue after the chief rabbi of Jerusalem at the time. Many medieval synagogues had a storage place for valuable documents called a *genizah* (Arabic *khaznah*, “treasury”).

The collection of documents are mainly business transactions, letters of credit, demands for payment, and so on that link Cairo’s Jews to those as far west as Rouen in France and as far east as India. Many of the documents are correspondences between Jews in Egypt and those in Yemen, which was a major trading hub on the Arabian Sea, the western-most part of the Indian Ocean. The documents are in Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic and include records that go back to before the building existed. Most of the documents are on papyrus, but some are on vellum, a sort of paper made from calfskin.

Between 1260 and 1500, the number of documents decreased because many Jews moved to Islamic Cairo, where a new synagogue was built. After 1500 and the arrival of large number of Jews from Granada in Spain, however, Jews were welcomed in Cairo, and the treasury had a large number of new documents added. The new Jews moved into the area vacated by Cairo’s Jews and gave the Ben Ezra Synagogue new life.

In 1896, several of the papyri were taken to Cambridge University in England. Solomon Schechter and Charles Taylor began scientifically examining the documents and found important names such as Maimonides among the fragments. Today, the documents are found in several university collections around the world.

## Egypt and the Torah

The Torah depicts Egypt as a place of great importance for the patriarch Jacob (Israel) and his sons. Joseph arrived there as a slave but rose to become the equivalent of prime minister and the pharaoh's most trusted noble. Yet the Torah also shows that mere generations later the descendants of Israel have become so numerous that the pharaoh has enslaved them and forced them to toil in misery. The book of Exodus reports that pharaoh ordered an infanticide of the Israelites, but the infant Moses was placed in a basket and set afloat on the Nile River by his parents. Moses is miraculously found and adopted by the daughter of the pharaoh and raised as an Egyptian in the royal household. Years later he becomes a prophet and leads the Israelites out of Egypt toward the land of Canaan, which God has promised as a home for them. The Jewish festival of Passover (Hebrew *Pesakh*) celebrates the escape (Greek *exodos*) from Egypt and is one of the most important Jewish religious observations.

As with most narratives in sacred text, scholars today do not view the happenings of the book of Exodus as literal historical events. No archaeological or textual records of any kind indicate that the Egyptians ever maintained slaves on the scale described by the Torah or that plagues were inflicted on Egypt as punishment. Nevertheless, most religious Jews accept the Torah's account as divine revelation, which means that Egypt remains a powerful symbol of past adversity and God's deliverance from oppression.

## Jews in Egypt: Roman and Medieval Ages

Classical sources indicate that Egypt was home to several Jewish communities during the time of the Roman Empire, most noticeably at Alexandria. With the coming of Christianity into Egypt, however, the pagan and Jewish communities became destabilized. The Egyptian pagan and Neoplatonist communities and temples were destroyed by hostile Christian congregations in the early fifth century CE, yet the Jewish community was able to survive the purges. Under Byzantine rule, Jewish communities had some freedom but were subject to continual pressure to convert to Christianity. However, in 639 CE the first Arab armies arrived in Egypt, and Egypt was under Muslim control by 642 CE. This was a positive change for the Jewish communities because Islamic law recognized the Jews as "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitab* in Arabic) and that the Jewish religion was divinely inspired. This being the case, the Muslims were obliged to offer protection and legal exemptions to Jewish communities within

their territories in exchange for annual tribute (Arabic *jizya*). This was a marked improvement from the treatment received at the hands of the Byzantines, and there is evidence that the Jews welcomed the change in rulership.

As the medieval period progressed, better and better historical records were created to show how the Jewish community functioned. Broadly speaking, the conditions of the Fatimid and post-Fatimid Jewish communities were markedly better than those endured by Jews in Europe during the same period. This does not mean the treatment of the Jewish community was ideal, and one reign in particular—that of the Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (ruled 996–1021)—proved to be difficult for both Jews and Christians. Yet history shows that Muslim rulers respected the Jews, and several Jewish citizens rose to positions of power and authority. A survey of records shows that Egyptian Jews were active and successful in many fields, including science, medicine, and public administration. Several caliphs appointed Jewish citizens to public offices, and eventually the official position of *nagid* (Hebrew for “ruler”) was created, a sort of “head of Jewish affairs” for a specific territory, and the first *nagid* of Egypt and Palestine was Judah ben Saadya (1065–1078) of Fustat.



**The Synagogue of Ben Ezra in Cairo dates to the 12th century, when the Church of Saint Michael was sold to pay taxes to the Fatamids. The synagogue was the site of the major find of the Genizah documents that showed the extreme distances of medieval Jewish trade—from Yemen and India to York in England. (John A. Shoup)**

Conditions in Egypt must have been attractive to the medieval Jewish community because Egypt was able to attract prominent and capable Jews from

abroad. A leading example, of course, is that of Moshe ben Maimon (1135–1204 CE), called Maimonides by his Western contemporaries. Initially from Andalusia (now a southern region of Spain), Maimonides moved to Egypt in 1198 from Morocco. His career was exemplary, and he rose from being a scholar to become *nagid*, and eventually he became the physician of the famous Sultan Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin). Maimonides was a polymath and wrote on various disciplines, but his theological writings remain today among the finest works of medieval Jewish scholarship.

The Mamluk period and Ottoman caliphate were more difficult for Egyptian Jews. Although some Jewish intellectuals were able to maintain good social standing and advance in their careers, the majority of Jewish communities experienced greater strictures than during the prior caliphates. Under the Mamalik (plural of *Mamluk*), taxes were increased. Where previous Muslim rulers had protected Jewish religious centers, the Jews now found their sites more vulnerable and even targeted by the government. The Ottomans went further, abolishing the position of the *nagid*. However, educated Jews were still found in the administration, and the 19th and 20th centuries shows active involvement of Egyptian Jews in the developing enterprise of journalism, where they owned and operated their own independent Egyptian Jewish newspapers in addition to working for mainstream Egyptian media. During this period, French was used more widely than Arabic among members of the Jewish community, except for its most educated members. In fact, records show that Jews in Egypt enjoyed greater freedoms than anywhere else in the Arab world, with the possible exception of Iraq. This attracted Jewish immigrants from other states, Arab and European alike. For this reason, by the end of the Ottoman period, the Egyptian Jewish community was composed of two distinct groups: Arab Jews and European Jews. The community also was divided into three ethnic denominations: Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and Karaite. The Karaites traced their descent from the original Jewish communities of Egypt, whereas the Sephardim were immigrants from Spain and North Africa and the Ashkenazim were immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe.

#### Jews in Egypt: The Modern Period

By the mid-20th century, Egypt's Jewish community was large (80,000) and relatively prosperous by the international standards of the time. The events of World War II, however, promoted anti-Semitic feeling in the region such that the Jewish quarter in Cairo was attacked and vandalized by members of the Muslim

Brotherhood and other youths in 1945. In 1948, the state of Israel was born, and this greatly intensified the level of instability in the Egyptian Jewish community for two major reasons. First, Israel was on Egypt's border, and Egypt actively opposed the creation of this new state and was a major participant in the Arab–Israeli War of 1948. Second, given the fresh hostility of much of the Muslim population toward its Jewish citizenry, emigration toward a Jewish state was a reasonable alternative to remaining in Egypt; although emigration to Europe may have been preferred by the upper classes, Israel was much closer and could be accessed over land. Immediately following the Arab–Israeli war, approximately 30,000 Egyptian Jews left Egypt for Israel or Europe. Another 40,000–50,000 Jewish citizens left following the 1956 conflict over the Suez Canal. The remaining population dwindled rapidly and numbered fewer than 100 by the end of the 20th century. Today, the Egyptian Jewish population is considerably smaller (50 at most), and members of the community fear that the Jewish population of Egypt may disappear entirely by 2050.

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Islam on the Nile](#).

*Connell Monette*

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# K

## KAMPALA

Kampala is the capital city of Uganda. It is located just north of the equator near the northwestern corner of Lake Victoria and a few miles west of the Victoria Nile. Kampala is Uganda's largest city and center of commerce, politics, and learning. The city has a population of about 2 million people, mostly ethnic Baganda (people of Buganda), a large and influential tribe. Kampala is also home to a large South Asian community of Indians and Pakistanis who immigrated to Uganda in the 20th century, many becoming Ugandan citizens. Kampala was originally the primary settlement of the Kingdom of Buganda in the 19th century and a center of Arab trade from the East African coast. The city was also the capital under British colonial rule of the Uganda Protectorate. Kampala was devastated by almost a decade of bloodshed and turmoil following independence from Britain but has since rebounded to enjoy a few decades of peace and prosperity.

With a tropical climate, Kampala spreads out over a hilly landscape. Each hill in Kampala has a distinct character. The city takes its name from Kampala Hill, named for the impala antelope. It was the site of an old 19th-century British fort. A large mosque has also been built on the hill. At the center of the city is Nakasero Hill and its bustling shopping district, bus and taxi terminals, and Hindu temple. Higher on the hill are office buildings and affluent residencies, including several foreign embassies. Other hills are topped by the Makerere University, the Kasubi royal tombs, and Protestant and Catholic churches. Rubaga and Mengo Hills were sites of 19th-century Buganda royal courts, and Mengo Hill remains the site of the royal palace. Kampala is a vibrant city with Asian shops, international businesses, street hawkers and beggars, and the notorious *budabudas*, motorcycle taxis that every tourist is warned against using.

In the late 1850s, Buganda's *Kabaka* (King) Mutesa I established his capital near present-day Kampala. The capital had little contact with the outside world



before John Hanning Speke and James Grant passed through in 1862. Speke described a beautiful village of large, round reed huts and a highly sophisticated court. But he found Mutesa to be bloodthirsty and cruel. By the time Henry Morton Stanley arrived in 1875, the town had grown and become a center of Arab trade and influence. English Protestants and French Catholics established missions in the capital in the late 1870s and immediately began a conflict with each other that had lasting effects. The conflicts worsened under Mutesa's successor, *Kabaka* Mwanga. Mwanga transferred his capital from Rubaga Hill to Mengo Hill. In the religious conflict, he took sides with the Catholics, even burning to death 30 Protestant royal pages. In 1890, the Imperial British East Africa Company sent Fredrick Lugard to annex Buganda and establish British control over the upper Nile River. Lugard chose Kampala Hill for his fort and finally coerced Mwanga into signing a treaty of protection. Lugard then found himself in the middle of the Christian wars. Early in 1892, the two sides clashed in the first Battle of Mengo Hill. Lugard and his army of Sudanese and Zanzibari soldiers came to the aid of the minority Protestants and won the battle. Afterward, Mwanga's authority diminished and Lugard's fort became the acting administrative center.

The British government took over in 1894 and created the Uganda Protectorate. Although Kampala was the capital, the actual seat of government was in Entebbe a few miles south, away from the religious tensions. Both cities were in Baganda territory, and the Baganda thrived under Britain's form of indirect rule to the exclusion of other tribes. Indians and Pakistanis also saw great opportunity in the protectorate and immigrated to Kampala, where they became wealthy in business and trade and a vital part of a modernizing economy.

Independence in 1962 brought tribal conflicts and government corruption, with Kampala often the center of bloodshed. A conflict between Prime Minister Milton Obote and the Buganda *Kabaka* Sir Edward Mutesa II, each vying for power, resulted in another battle at Mengo Hill in 1966. Government troops led by Idi Amin attacked the royal palace. The king escaped, but 2,000 civilians were massacred. Under Amin's eight-year dictatorship (1971–1979), hundreds of thousands of Ugandans were imprisoned, tortured, and murdered. The Asian community was expelled from the country, and the economy collapsed. Each successive "liberation" of Kampala resulted in looting and mayhem. After the National Resistance Movement under Yoweri Museveni gained control in 1986, Uganda saw a period of stability that has allowed Kampala to revive and prosper

in the hopes of a better future.

**See also:** [Buganda](#); [Idi Amin Dada](#); [Mutesa I](#); [Stanley, Henry Morton](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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## KASSALA

Kassala is an important city in eastern Sudan and capital of the state of the same name. The city lies 250 miles (402 kilometers) east of Khartoum along the Gash River at the foot of the Taka Mountains near the Eritrean border. The city has a population of more than 400,000 and is an important market town known for its fruit. Kassala grew out of a 19th-century military encampment and, as a border town, has changed hands several times over the decades. Although the population is Muslim, local tribes are non-Arab and the government of Sudan's Arabization policies have brought tension to the region in modern times.

The Gash River is a seasonal river within the Atbara River watershed. It flows out of the Eritrean highlands bringing summer flooding to what is known as the Gash "delta" before its waters are lost in the desert sands. Nomadic tribes have cultivated the Gash delta as part of their annual movements for centuries. In 1840, an Egyptian military expedition arrived in the area to bring the nomadic Beja tribes under Egyptian control. The expedition camped near a Khatmiyya Sufi holy site along the Gash. The Egyptians established a fort at the site, around which the town of Kassala grew. In 1883, the Beja joined the Mahdist revolt against Egypt, stranding Kassala's Egyptian garrison, which held out for 20 months against the Mahdi armies but finally surrendered in 1885. Kassala became a Mahdist stronghold from which forays could be made into Ethiopia and Italian Eritrea. A Mahdist incursion into Eritrea in 1893 was repelled by the Italians, who followed up their victory by taking control of Kassala in 1894. The position of the Italian garrison at Kassala weakened after the Italian army was defeated in Ethiopia at the Battle of Adwa in 1896. Fearing for the safety of its garrison, Italy appealed to Britain for help. In part to draw the Mahdist army away from Kassala, an Anglo-Egyptian expedition entered northern Sudan, beginning the reconquest. In 1897, the Italians handed Kassala over to the Egyptians. Under Anglo-Egyptian rule, commercial cotton schemes were developed in the Gash delta near Kassala. Railway links to the coast provided easy marketing and export. Many Beja found employment in the agricultural

schemes as well as the docks of Port Sudan. In the European tug-of-war of World War II, Kassala was again occupied by an Italian army in 1940, forcing out the British garrison. British troops returned several months later to retake Kassala, from which an expedition was launched against Italian Eritrea in 1941, ultimately ending Italy's hold in East Africa.

Since Sudan's independence in 1956, Kassala has seen an influx of people from other regions, including refugees from fighting in Eritrea and Ethiopia, Nubians from the north, and other displaced people. Periods of unrest have seen local groups siding with rebels against the government during civil wars. Arabization policies of the Islamic government have been resented among non-Arab groups, whose religious practices are condemned as unorthodox. Like other outlying regions away from the Arab–Islamic core, the Kassala area suffers from marginalization and poor government investment.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#).

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## KHARTOUM AND OMDURMAN

Both Khartoum and Omdurman are located where the Blue Nile empties into the White Nile. Despite their geopolitical location, both cities are fairly new. The older Khartoum was founded in 1825 by Muhammad 'Ali's governor-general, 'Uthman Bey. Khartoum's name comes from the Arabic word for an elephant's trunk or a hose (*khartum*) because the shape of the Blue Nile entering the White Nile forms what looks like an elephant's uplifted trunk. Omdurman (or Umdurman) was a small village until Muhammad Ahmad the Mahdi set up his tent there during the siege of Khartoum in 1884. To make the change from Egyptian rule to rule by the Mahdi, the capital was moved from Khartoum to Omdurman. The Mahdi and his *khalifah* (successor) built numerous mud brick buildings in Omdurman, including the tomb of the Mahdi himself. Khartoum was once again the capital following the defeat of the *khalifah* and has remained the capital of Sudan ever since.

Today, Khartoum is Sudan's second largest and the capital with more than 5 million people, whereas Omdurman has more than 2.5 million people. The modern cities developed after independence in 1956 and today boast such features as universities, hotels, bridges, high-rise office and residential buildings, and even a shopping mall called Afra Mall. Monies poured into the country as a result of oil sales, especially to China. The total number of residents also increased dramatically with the Sudanese civil wars as refugees sought peace from the conflict in the south and later from the conflict in Darfur. The civil disturbances reached Khartoum when members of the Darfur Justice and Equality group reached the suburbs of Khartoum and fought with government forces in 2008.

Omdurman has seen similar developments since independence. In 2008, it also was attacked by the Darfur Justice and Equality group's armed men who

fought a heavy battle with government forces. Nonetheless, because the Mahdi's tomb is located in Omdurman, it has less business and fewer government buildings. It is famous for its theaters, music, and art institutions, which have flourished since Sudan's independence. In addition, the city is more religious than Khartoum partially because it has the Mahdi's tomb and the tomb of Shaykh Hamad al-Nil, where Sufis of various orders come to perform *dhikr* and *hadrah* every Friday. Among the best-known Sufis are the Whirling Dervishes, the Sudanese members of the *Mevlevi* or *Mawlawi* Sufi order and its offshoot, the *Khalwatiyyah*. They are similar to those of Egypt who also perform for the public in Cairo at the Ghawriyyah. In Sudan and Egypt, they wear colorful patchwork robes that should not be confused with the patchwork clothes worn by supporters of the Mahdi.

Both cities became famous as a result of the Mahdi's rebellion against Egypt and the persons of General Charles Gordon and Muhammad Ahmad the Mahdi. For a year, he besieged the city, slowly drawing a net around Khartoum. A British relief column moved slowly up the Nile River from Egypt and arrived only days after the city had been taken. When the reconquest of Sudan began, the Anglo-Egyptian forces again moved from Egypt up the Nile, and *Khalifah* 'Abdallah al-Ta'ishi, assembled his forces outside of Omdurman at Kerreri, some seven miles (11 kilometers) north along the west bank of the Nile. His forces were defeated and retreated first to Omdurman, where the *khalifah* rested for a short time (it is said he took a nap and ate lunch) before decamping with his army and family to the south. The British bombarded the Mahdi's tomb and dug up his bones. His head was displayed by Kitchener, who originally planned to have a drinking cup made from it. Because of strong public reaction against this and the bombardment of the tomb, Queen Victoria condemned these events and Kitchener's plan and the skull was eventually returned for reburial. Unfortunately, the rest of the bones had already been thrown into the Nile. The barbarity of the British officers was never forgotten in Sudan.

The British established a school for boys in Khartoum. The Gordon Memorial College opened in 1902, and a statue to the general was also erected. In 1959, the Sudanese asked the British to remove the statue, and it was relocated to the Gordon School (for boys) in the United Kingdom. The British always thought the Sudanese loved Gordon, but he was never a hero to them. His statue only reminded the Sudanese of a sad time in their history.

Khartoum was first established as a military garrison to "spread fire and sword" in the Nile valley as ordered by Muhammad 'Ali (Collins 2008, p. 12).



To do this, Sudanese troops were recruited, and the Shayqiyah were recruited as cavalry and infantry, mainly from the Awlad al-Bahr Arabs, were recruited as the *jihadiyyah*. They extracted taxes and punished those who were late in their payments. Khartoum grew as a staging place for trade between Egypt and Sudan; slaves and ivory were the first main commodities. Once the slave trade was suppressed in the mid-1800s, ivory and agricultural products such as millet replaced slaves. With the need to expand the production of cotton, the British embarked on projects to bring irrigated canals into the wide plains between the Blue and White Nile Rivers called the Jazirah or Gazirah. Cotton production was first introduced in 1904; by 1914, 24 square kilometers (nine miles) of cotton were being exploited. In 1926, a dam on the Blue Nile at Sennar was opened and irrigated large areas in the Jazirah. Today, some 4,300 kilometers (2,700 miles) of canals bring water to individual farms. Many of the farmers had been nomadic herders grazing their animals on the lands now under plow. Khartoum used to ship the cotton to England, but today it is used in the factory production of textiles in Khartoum.

**See also:** [Gordon, Charles George; History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Kitchener, Horatio Herbert](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#).

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### **KHEDIVE ISMA‘IL (1830–1895)**

Khedive Isma‘il was the son of Ibrahim Pasha, grandson of Muhammad ‘Ali. It was believed that his mother, Khushiyar, was the sister of Pertevniyal, the wife of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II (ruled 1808–1839), which made him first cousin of the Ottoman Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (ruled 1861–1876). He received a European education and returned to Egypt. He served his uncle, Sa‘id, and was sent on numerous missions, including to Sudan to put down a revolt.

On Sa‘id’s death, Isma‘il became the *Wali* or vice royal of Egypt in 1863, and he began his campaign to be granted the title of khedive (“Lord” or “Autonomous Ruler”) of Egypt. His efforts were accomplished when in 1867

Sultan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz granted him the title in an official *firman* or royal decree. By 1873, the country was officially autonomous within the Ottoman Empire (Hitti 2002, p. 750).

Isma‘il set about reforming the country on the scale of Muhammad ‘Ali. He had a massive program of infrastructure construction that included building railroads that linked nearly every part of the kingdom to Cairo and Alexandria. His railway system made Egypt one of the best-linked countries at the time. He had a new city of Cairo built on the model of Paris, which made Cairo one of the most beautiful cities in all of the Mediterranean. He expanded cotton production by building canals for irrigation water. He tried to maintain a royal monopoly over the production of cotton, but when the prices of raw cotton dropped when the American Civil War ended, he became desperate to fund his grand schemes (Hourani 1991, p. 282). He continued with his building projects and in 1869 had the Cairo Opera House built as part of the grand opening of the Suez Canal. He commissioned the great Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi to write the opera *Aida*, which is set in ancient Egypt. It was supposed to be the opera house’s opening performance, but because of the costs of transporting sets and costumes from Europe, Verdi’s *Rigoletto* was performed instead. He invited Europe’s heads of state and had two palaces built for them, the Jazirah Palace and Mena House, both of which stand today as hotels (Hourani 1991, p. 283).

Deeply in debt to European creditors, Isma‘il had no choice but to sell his shares in the Suez Canal in 1875 for nearly 4 million pounds sterling. Britain bought the shares to ensure its troop movements to India would not be hampered by a potentially hostile government. He was forced to agree to a joint British and French commission that was established to manage Egypt’s finances. The Caisse de la Dette or Bureau of the Debt was also called the *Dual Control* and was operated by Evelyn Baring, Auckland Colvin, and Monsieur de Blignières, a much hated institution by growing numbers of Egyptian nationalists (Hitti 1991, p. 750). Although the financial reforms proposed by Isma‘il were turned down as unfeasible by the two controllers, they would be the first ones imposed by Baring at a later date.

In addition to the debt incurred by the country, Isma‘il embarked on expanding his territory in Sudan and attempted to conquer Ethiopia. He had staffed his Sudanese garrisons with Europeans in the hopes of pleasing the powers with his commitment to ending Sudan’s slave trade. He had been forced to allow Rahma Mansur al-Zubayr the title of governor of Sudan, but his overall governor was British general and mystic General Charles (“Chinese”) Gordon, a

known antislaver (Collins 2008, p. 19). The appointment of a Christian to such a high post caused problems with the Sudanese and would later erupt into the Mahdi's revolt (Collins 2008, p. 20). He also tried to invade Ethiopia, but his troops were defeated first at Gundat in 1875 and at Gura' in 1876 and Ismail's son, Hasan, captured and held for ransom (Collins 2008, p. 19). Nonetheless, the Egyptians held onto much of the land under dispute that became the Red Sea province of Eritrea and was taken by the Italians in 1890.

The one important factor that then emerged was the need to call a national assembly and then an elected parliament. The national assembly was needed to pass new taxes, but because most members were large landowners, they did not want to do this and became an instrument to voice Egyptian dislike for the Dual Control. They were in favor of the nationalist uprising by Colonel 'Urabi and against Dual Control (Barthorp 1988, p. 28). Finding no support from Isma'il in putting down the revolt, in 1879 the powers demanded that Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II (ruled 1876–1909) dismiss Isma'il from office and bring in his heir, Tawfiq (Barthorp 1988, p. 23).

Isma'il took his money and women with him to Italy and later to Istanbul, where he lived a lavish life in retirement and under house arrest in a *Yali* or luxurious summer house on the Bosphorus. He lived there until his death in 1895 (Larousse, n.d.).

**See also:** Ahmad 'Urabi; Barring, Sir Evelyn (Lord Cromer); Gordon, Charles George; Muhammad 'Ali; Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi.

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## KHEDIVE TAWFIQ (1852–1892)

Muhammad Tawfiq Pasha came to the throne of Egypt in 1879 when his father, Isma‘il, was deposed by two European powers—Britain and France. When Isma‘il was replaced, the country was under considerable stress with financial bankruptcy and a major rebellion in Sudan. Tawfiq had led the life of a country gentleman and had not been educated in Europe like his father or brothers. He did not hold any public office until in 1878, when he was appointed to the National Council after Prime Minister Nubar Pasha had been dismissed. He demonstrated that he had no ambition but was governed by his common sense when all around him there were intrigues, especially against Britain and France. He soon retired from the National Council to live the life of a country gentleman, but this was disturbed again shortly after.

In 1879, Tawfiq was made khedive of Egypt. The news was reportedly not pleasing to him, and he boxed the ears of the first servant who brought him the news. For two years, the great powers did nothing to help Egypt’s situation, and Tawfiq was blamed by his people for taking no action to counter the Dual Control of Evelyn Baring, Auckland Colvin, and Mr. de Blignières, who ran the country. This situation was intolerable to the Egyptian army. Under Colonel Ahmad ‘Urabi, the army rebelled after anti-Christian riots had broken out in Alexandria. Fifty Europeans had been killed and many more wounded. The British responded by bombarding Alexandria and landing British troops. The rebellion was put to an end at the Battle of Tell al-Kabir by British forces.

Tawfiq was soon embroiled in the events of the Sudan where forces of the holy man Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi rose in rebellion in 1882. Unable to bring order, the British hit on the idea that General Charles Gordon, former governor of Sudan, could save the day. This was based on their own idea that Gordon’s presence was enough to replace a whole army and that he was revered by the Sudanese. The truth was somewhat different, but he nonetheless was

appointed governor-general in 1884 with orders to withdraw as many civilians and military personnel from Sudan as possible (Collins 2008, p. 23). This was an illusory plan and proved nearly impossible from the outset when large parts of Sudan declared allegiance to the Mahdi.

For nearly a year, Gordon and his garrison of men were able to hold out against the Mahdi and his men but eventually the city fell in January 1885 (Barthorp 1988, p. 111). The news was received with shock and horror in both Cairo and London. In 1884, Baring had requested that the khedive relinquish any claim to Sudan, which he did. Nonetheless, for Britain, the Egyptian claim to Sudan needed to be upheld to keep other powers out of the area and for Britain to keep its claim to the source of the Nile. The reconquest of the Sudan happened in 1898 after Tawfiq's short reign came to an end.

During his time as khedive, Tawfiq did his best to ensure that his people's education was up to European standards, and he visited cholera victims in the hospital during an 1883 epidemic. He was interested in justice and improved Egypt's judicial system and was also interested in irrigation systems and continued to improve these as well. He showed great kindness toward his people and those from outside of the country—both the British and representatives of the Ottoman sultan. He dismissed Nubar Pasha in 1888 and replaced him with Riyadh Pasha when it was obvious that Nubar and the British resident were at odds with each other.

Tawfiq died in 1892 in his palace at Halwan, near Cairo. He had only one wife, Amina Ilhamy, who was the daughter of an important politician in Istanbul. He was succeeded by his son, 'Abbas II Hilmi, an ardent anti-British nationalist.

**See also:** [Barring, Sir Evelyn \(Lord Cromer\)](#); [Gordon, Charles George](#); [Khedive Isam'il](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#).

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## KING FARUQ (1920–1965)

King Faruq (or Farouk) was the last of Muhammad ‘Ali’s line to rule Egypt beginning in 1936. In 1952, he was overthrown in a military coup led by General Muhammad Najib and Colonel Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasir and forced into exile in Europe. He had been born to Queen Nazli and King Fu’ad and was the first of Muhammad ‘Ali’s family to speak Arabic well; his father spoke Turkish, Italian, and French. Faruq’s mother, Nazli, was of Arabic-speaking Franco–Turkish descent and made sure her son could speak Arabic fluently. Because he spoke Arabic, he was immensely popular with both the Egyptian aristocracy and the people.

Before he ascended the throne at age 15, he had gone to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, where he nurtured his great mistrust and hate for the English (Cooper 1989, p. 21). Like his father, his own advisers and servants were Italian, a preference over other Europeans. In 1938, he married Egyptian aristocrat Safinaz Zulfikar, who was renamed Queen Faridah or the “Unique Queen.” She gave birth to a several daughters before she divorced Faruq in 1948.

In 1936, Britain and Egypt negotiated the Anglo–Egyptian Treaty. The treaty renegotiated Egypt’s 1923 constitution and continued to spark unrest among Egyptians until the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956. There were frequent student-led riots demanding the return of the 1923 constitution.

During World War II, the British ambassador in Cairo (a change from high commissioner in 1936), Sir Miles Lampson (served 1934–1946), treated King Faruq as unimportant to decisions and never consulted him. When Faruq was asked to surround himself and his family with Britons and not Italians, he responded that he would get rid of his Italians when Lampson got rid of his (he was married to an Italian) (“King Faruk of Egypt” n.d.). When war broke out, Egypt remained neutral, but the British forced all Italians in Egypt to leave the country. Unable to do anything, Faruq retreated into himself and led a dissolute

life of a gambler and grew fat.

During the war, a political crisis occurred in 1942 when the British wanted a more pro-British government in place than that of Husayn Sirri Pasha. Faruq demurred and refused to dismiss Husayn Sirri. British tanks surrounded 'Abdin Palace. Lampson presented King Faruq with an ultimatum that required Husayn Sirri to be replaced with Mustafa al-Nahhas Pasha. At the time, Britain was close to losing Egypt altogether to German General Erwin Rommel at the Second Battle of El Alamein. Egyptians hated the English so intensely that, even in the army, Egyptians could not be trusted by the English. Egyptian sentiments were further inflamed by the German and Italian bombing of Alexandria and other cities. Although the damage was light, the people blamed the English presence for the raids. In defiance of the English, Faruq had refused to dim the lights of his palace in Alexandria and had even established diplomatic relations with the Vichy French. Faruq was forced to back down and replace Husayn Sirri with Mustafa al-Nahhas and a government favorable to the English. In 1945, near the end of the war, Faruq declared war on the Axis powers under pressure from the British.

When Israel unilaterally declared its independence in 1948, Egypt joined other Arab countries and declared war. The Egyptian army was ill equipped with antiquated weapons supplied by the British, and both the minister of war and the prime minister asked the king to not go to war, but the following day he declared war on Israel. The king sent some of his closest friends to Belgium to buy arms, and it was speculated that the king and his cronies made millions from the arms deals.

The Egyptian army had no air force and held the area of Gaza and the southern Palestinian town of al-Faluja. The Egyptian army was supported by Muslim Brotherhood militia, and the forces besieged in al-Faluja proved their mettle in the ensuing fight. The aftermath of the disaster was the suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood because the government did not want an armed militia to threaten internal security. The officers and men were hosted by singer Umm Kulthum once they had returned, but the officers felt humiliated by the government's lack of preparedness for the conflict. The young officers began to meet and discuss the eventual overthrow of the government.

In 1951, new elections returned Mustafa al-Nahhas and the Wafd Party to power and Faruq married the commoner Nariman Sadiq, who produced an heir, Ahmad Fu'ad II, in 1952. Al-Nahhas tried to deflect public attention from pressing internal matters to the Suez Canal and the withdrawal of British troops.

Eventually, he had to unilaterally abrogate the Anglo–Egyptian Treaty of 1936. The parliament immediately declared Faruq king of Egypt and Sudan, but Britain’s situation in the country was not undermined. Nonetheless, a guerrilla war began in the Suez Canal zone with operations against the British. In 1952, the British believed the police force was harboring guerrillas, so they surrounded and bombarded the Isma‘iliyah police station at close range with tanks. Forty Egyptians were killed and another 70 wounded, which sparked violent reaction in Cairo. Rioters burned many of the European-owned businesses in the city in what was called “Black Saturday.”

In 1952, the Egyptian army elected its own candidate for presidency of the officer’s club, General Muhammad Najib. The army had grown apart from the monarchy, especially after the 1948 war with Israel. Shortly afterward, the army took over in a coup, and three days later Faruq left the country. He abdicated in favor of his infant son, Ahmad Fu‘ad II, but a republic was declared and Fu‘ad II “ruled” for only a year. Muhammad Najib was the new president of the republic. In 1958, Faruq was stripped of his Egyptian citizenship but was granted Monacan citizenship by his good friend, Prince Rainier III.

Faruq moved to Italy and had an affair with Italian opera singer Irma Capece Minutolo, who later claimed they were married. Faruq grew to a huge size—more than 300 pounds (136 kilograms)—and ate massive meals. He died as a result of stomach problems after a large meal. He was at first denied a funeral in Egypt, but Saudi Arabia offered to allow his body to be buried there. ‘Abd al-Nasir, Egypt’s new president, allowed him to be brought to Egypt and buried without honors. His body was later moved to al-Rifa‘i Mosque where it is now interred.

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [Umm Kulthum](#).

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## KITCHENER, HORATIO HERBERT (1850–1916)

Horatio Herbert Kitchner was the *sirdar* or commander of the Anglo–Egyptian army that reconquered Sudan in 1898. He was from an upper-class British family and was educated in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. He was pro-French and volunteered to serve in the Franco–Prussian War. His service in France broke British neutrality in the conflict, and he was recalled and reprimanded by the commander in chief of the British army. He then served in Palestine, Egypt, and Cyprus, where he was a surveyor and learned Arabic.

After the surveys he did in western Palestine (then under Ottoman rule), he was assigned the vice consul position in Anatolia. In 1883, he was promoted to captain, but his position in the Egyptian army was as a *bimbashi* (equivalent to major), and he was sent to help reorganize the Egyptian army after the defeat of Ahmad ‘Urabi at Tall al-Kabir. In 1883, he was part of General Garnet Wolseley’s expedition to save General Charles Gordon in Khartoum. He was appointed governor of the eastern Sudan province of the Red Sea, but in reality he controlled only the port of Suakin; the rest of the province was held by ‘Uthman Digna and his forces.

In 1898, he was given command of the Anglo–Egyptian force that reconquered Sudan. He was at the Battles of Atbara and Umdurman. Humiliating *Amir* Muhammad Mahmud by parading him in chains, at Umdurman he not only commanded the bombardment of the Mahdi’s tomb but also had the body dug up and wanted to use the skull as a drinking cup (Barthorp 1984, p. 151; Moorehead 2000, p. 372). He was noted for his lack of concern of both enemy wounded, whom he left to die under the sun after the Battle of Umdurman, and his own men. He was nonetheless popular with his officers, and they began to wear mustaches fashioned like his with the ends extended and rolled.

After his defeat at Umdurman, the *khalifah* fled south to near Aba Island and was never betrayed by his followers. They waited and prepared for another battle

against the Anglo–Egyptian forces at Umm Diwaykarat in 1899 (Collins 2008, p. 32). The British felt the conquest of the Sudan was imperative because the French were ambitious to claim most of Central Africa. In that effort, in 1897 a French expedition under the command of Jean-Baptiste Marchand began a long march from Brazzaville in French Congo to the Nile with the purpose of claiming the Nile’s headwaters for France. The British proceeded up the Nile after the *khalifah*’s final defeat to find a French flag flying at the town of Fashoda.

France and Britain nearly went to war over the so-called Fashoda Incident in which the French were eventually induced to lower their flag and acknowledge British control. The agreement was ratified in London in 1899 as an amendment to the 1898 Niger Convention between Britain and France (Lewis 1988, p. 233). Nonetheless, the agreement was so distasteful to the French that the British changed the name of the town from Fashoda to Kodok so the name would never be said again. Kitchener was appointed governor of Sudan and began to reform the administration. He served for only one year before he was sent to serve as the second in command to general Lord Roberts against the Boers in South Africa in 1899. He was just as ruthless against the Boers as he was against the Sudanese and “invented” the concept of concentration camps for Boer women and children to end civilian support for the fighters.

In 1902, he was sent to India where he was commander in chief of the Indian army. In 1911, he was back in Egypt where he was the counsel-general during the reign of the anti-British Khadawi Abbas II Hilmi. In 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, he was recalled to London, where he served as the secretary of war. Although initially against the allied landing at Gallipoli, he nonetheless supported Winston Churchill. The British forces attacking Gallipoli were driven off in a calamitous defeat. Kitchener was also responsible for the doomed invasion of Iraq and the attempt to capture Baghdad; the Iraq invasion army was surrounded and forced to surrender to the Turks. Kitchener died on June 5, 1916, when the ship he was on was sunk by a German U-boat while on a diplomatic mission to Russia.

**See also:** Ahmad ‘Urabi; Gordon, Charles George; Khartoum and Omdurman; Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi; ‘Uthman Digna.

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## KOM OMBO

Kom Ombo is 31 miles (50 kilometers) north of Aswan and has a long history stretching back to pharaonic times (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 470). Called *Nubt* or *gold* in ancient Egyptian, it was famous for its temple dedicated to the gods Sobek (the crocodile god, a manifestation of the Nile), Hathor, and Khonsu (Bains and Målek 1990, p. 75). The temple dates from the Ptolemaic period and was built by Ptolemy VI Philometor (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004, p. 232). A later Roman-period shrine to Hathor includes many doctor's surgery tools on an offering table among the few such pictures found (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 75). Pharaoh Cleopatra VII is also represented (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004, p. 233). Called *Omboi* by the Greeks and *Ambo* by the Romans, the town originally had two parts, one on each bank of the river. The town later was a seat of a Christian bishopric; despite the fact there are no indigenous Christians at the site, the Catholic Church still retains the title. It was one of the titles of the late Pope John Paul II while he was bishop of Krakow.

The modern town of Kom Ombo is the major site of the resettlement of Egypt's displaced Nubians. Of the town's 60,000 inhabitants today, the majority are Upper Egyptian Arabs rather than Nubians. The first wave of Nubians arrived in 1963 with the rising levels of the water behind the construction site. The Nubians did not like the settlement because it was too far from the Nile—approximately one mile (three kilometers) from the banks of the river. Being the desert, the conditions were harsh at first. Attempts to reestablish agricultural production initially failed because the water from the two wells dug for them was too salty and a pump brought in by a local entrepreneur broke down and was too expensive to fix (Kennedy 1978, p. xxi). Although local leaders were involved in choosing the relocation site, the land took time to develop and produce crops of sugarcane and corn. In addition, many of the men obtained jobs in local government offices (Aswan Province) or as teachers in schools or in

local hospitals. Fortunately, money from the white-collar jobs they had helped ease the pain of the relocation (Kennedy 1978, p. xxii).



**Feluccas on the Nile in front of the Temple of Sobek (the crocodile god), at Kom Ombo. (John A. Shoup)**

The company in charge of building the dam was supposed to offer each family money and a new house in Kom Ombo in compensation. This did not work out, and many locals received nothing. Those who were able, moved on their own to the area around Aswan and built their own houses, and those who had no choice went to Kom Ombo. Some at Kom Ombo built their houses using their own architectural forms rather than the ones the government offered to build. The Kenuz Nubians, in particular, have a rich heritage of local preferred architecture and build their own houses. Eventually, architect Omar el-Hakim, a student of the well-known Hassan Fathy and called “the architect of the poor,” also began to use local architecture in the houses he designed. The work of Hassan Fathy, el-Hakim’s mentor, was not wanted by the poor but was sought after by the rich for their country villas. Omar el-Hakim had greater success with Nubian clients.

**See also:** [Aswan](#); [Nubians](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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# L

## LAKE ALBERT

Lake Albert or Luta Nzige is located in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo and serves as a source for the Nile River. Shortly after independence, the president of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) attempted to rename the lake Lake Mabuto Sese Seko after himself, but the older name stuck. Lake Albert is the seventh largest lake in Africa and in the top 27 in the world. One hundred miles (160 kilometers) long and 19 miles (30 kilometers) wide, its maximum depth is 168 feet (51 meters). The lake is fed by the smaller Lake Edward, and it is connected to Lake Albert by the Semliki River. The far reaches of the Semliki are in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Ruwenzori Mountains and the legendary Mountains of the Moon, which are in Uganda, Rwanda, and Congo.

At Lake Albert, the Victoria Nile plunges through a narrow gorge and falls off the edge of the rift valley into Lake Albert at Murchison Falls. The Nile emerging from Lake Albert is the Albert Nile; once inside Sudan's borders, it changes its name to the Arabic *Bahr al-Jabal* or the Mountain River after the Ruwenzori Mountains. Both Murchison Falls and the Albert Nile are close to each other with only 10 miles (16 kilometers) between them. John Hanning Speke and his companion, James Augustus Grant, neglected to visit the lake (Jeal 2011, p. 180) even having been told by natives of the existence of a lake called *Luta Nzige*. Both were in poor health, however, and had been "taxed" by local leaders for permission to pass through their lands, and they were months behind meeting John Petherwick, who had been sent to resupply them for the rest of their journey up the Nile and then back to England in 1863. Instead of meeting Petherwick, who was out hunting, Speke and Grant met Samuel and Florence Baker at Gondokoro. They told the Bakers of the lake, and the Bakers decided to see if they could "find" it.

In 1863, the Bakers set off for the Luta Nzige. For their safety, they traveled

with a man named Ibrahim, a Syrian in the employ of the Egyptian–Ottoman governor of Sudan. The Bakers’ own men threatened mutiny and found it more prudent to travel with Ibrahim’s well-armed caravan, even though his purpose was to take slaves. This took them off the course of the Nile, but they came back to the Victoria Nile at Karuma Falls. They returned inland and struck Lake Albert in 1864. Both Samuel and Florence were ill with malaria and had not taken quinine pills for months (Jeal 2011, p. 228). The couple was so ill that it took them two hours to descend to the lakeshore (Jeal 2011, p. 232). Despite their travails, they renamed the body of water as Lake Albert in honor of the Great Britain’s prince consort and Queen Victoria’s husband. They were nearly drowned by large waves in the lake because of a heavy storm. They traveled to find the Albert Nile’s exit from the lake at Magungu (Guadalupi 1997, p. 179). Like Speke and Grant, they did not navigate around the lake. They stayed in Bunyoro for six months to recover their health and arrived in Gondokoro in 1865 (Guadalupi 1997, p. 180).

The actual connection between Lake Albert and the Nile was verified by Henry Morton Stanley during his expedition to extract Emin Pasha, the governor of Equatoria, in 1886. Although the purpose for the expedition was to rescue Pasha from the Mahdi and his successor, the *khalifah*, Stanley took a route from the Congo that brought him across the Ruwenzori Mountains, and he was able to “discover” Lake Edward, map the Semliki River, and descend to Lake Albert as well as rescue Emin Pasha. He found Pasha not in danger and unwilling to leave, but a mutiny by his men forced him to finally agree with Stanley and accompany him to the East African coast.

Lake Albert supplies considerable water to the Nile; the Semliki River itself drains the area with an average rainfall of 51 inches (130 centimeters). The flow to the Nile is less because of the Sudd, which absorbs much of the annual floodwaters. On average, the White Nile supplies 14 percent of the annual flow to the Nile above Khartoum, yet it comes at the time of year when the Blue Nile flood has finished. Recently, the region has been explored by an oil company for its mineral resources (“Lake Albert” 2016).

**See also:** Baker, Samuel, and Baker, Florence; Bunyoro; Grant, James Augustus; Speke, John Hanning.

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## LAKE KYOGA

Lake Kyoga is a shallow depression that was the lowest point in a rift valley, becoming a back pond of the Kafu River. The Victoria Nile flows through the lake and carries on to Lake Albert, where it emerges as the Albert Nile until it reaches the border with South Sudan where its name changes to *Bahr al-Jabal*. The lake is shallow—no deeper than 16 feet (5.7 meters)—and it covers 660 square miles (1,720 square kilometers). Much of the lake is less than 13 feet (four meters) deep, and there are large areas where it 10 ten feet (three meters) or less. The area that is less than 10 feet deep has a large amount of reeds and papyrus growth, including floating islands made of papyrus that are tossed about by storms and cause havoc for local fishermen’s nets.

The lake was first “discovered” in 1876 by Italian explorer Carlo Piaggini who came to the Equatoria Province of Egypt to collect plant and animal specimens. He accomplished naturalists who arrived in the southern-most area controlled by Egypt in 1856 and made further expeditions in 1860–61, 1863–65, 1871, and 1875. During these trips he made extensive ethnographic notes on the Zande (1863–65) and traveled to Lake Tana (1871) in Ethiopia as well as explored the headwaters of the Nile (1875–76). He was the first European to see Lake Kyoga, which Speke and Grant had not seen in 1863. The latter pair had been detained by King Kumrasi of Bunyoro; his rapacious behavior of fleecing travelers of everything he could made them eager to move on without looking for either Lake Albert or Lake Kyoga. Both men were ill, and Grant still suffered from an abscess on his leg that made walking difficult. Piaggi died in 1877 while on another expedition on the Blue Nile in Ethiopia.

With 46 species of fish in the lake, fishing has long been the main activity for locals. The lake has not been polluted by industrial waste. There is only one major predatory fish in the lake, but there are many crocodiles. In the 1950s, Nile perch were stocked in the lake for commercial and sport fishing. A freshwater variety of sardine is heavily exploited by local fishermen, and the



Ugandan government plans to develop this resource. Most of the fish varieties in Lake Kyoga are more like those in Lake Victoria than those in Lake Albert.

Local fishermen make boats by tightly binding papyrus reeds together just like the ancient Egyptians. The reeds are also used for roofing houses and to make woven mats for the floors and sides of their huts.

**See also:** [Bahr al-Ghazal River](#); [Grant, James Augustus](#); [Lake Albert](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#); [Sudd](#).

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## LAKE MARIUT

Lake Mariut or Maryut is called *Buhayrat Maryut* in Arabic. This salt lake in northern Egypt is separated from the Mediterranean Sea by a narrow isthmus of sand. In ancient times, it was called *Marea* or *Mareotis*, and its modern name derives from this. In the recent past, it was much larger, covering 77 square miles (200 square kilometers); today it covers only around 19 square miles (50 square kilometers). The lake was once fed by the Canopic branch of the Nile, but in the 13th century it was closed by blowing sand that drifted over the Nile to block water from entering. The British also blocked the lake, separating it into two—Maryut and Idku—in hopes of trapping Napoleon’s troops in the marshes. As a result, the lake became smaller and more saline. It is not connected to the Mahmudiyyah Canal, which runs between Maryut and Idku and receives little water from the Nile.

In ancient Egypt, the lake was highly active as noted by Pliny the Elder, who noted that Alexandria’s lake harbors were more active than its Mediterranean harbors. Although little archeology has been done along the former lakeshore, we know from historical accounts that several country villas produced wine. In fact, the lakeshore had been a major producer of wines. Ancient authors also noted that the lake was inhabited by Egyptian bandits who used the dense reed beds as a refuge from the law. These bandits allegedly made roads through the reeds that were so twisted only those who lived on the lake could find their way through them. Anyone from the outside soon became lost.

Now that so much of the lake is exposed and the southern part is open for farming, archeological excavations may be possible. There is more interest in Alexandria’s past as well because of recent underwater discoveries offshore, and a new library may bring more tourists to visit the sites. Today, fishing is still

done in the lake, and fish farms supply the Alexandrian market. The lake, however, is highly polluted today with industrial and human waste dumped directly into its waters.

**See also:** [Alexandria](#).

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## LAKE NASSER

Lake Nasser (*Buhayrat Nasir*), also called Lake Nubia (*Buhayrat Nubah*) in Sudan, is caused by the Aswan High Dam and is 340 miles (550 kilometers) long and 22 miles (35 kilometers) wide, covering a total area of 2,030 square miles (5,250 square kilometers). It can hold as much as three years of water from the Nile with 32 cubic miles (132 cubic kilometers), making it one of the 10 human-made lakes in the world. Lake Nasser and the Aswan High Dam provide 50 percent of Egypt's electricity needs and have been able to expand agricultural production. The dam and subsequent lake were part of Egypt's drive to modernize its people and its economy.

The lake has allowed a comeback of some of Egypt's fauna such as the Nile crocodile. This crocodile has always been treated with reverence by Egyptians; even today, stuffed crocodiles are often displayed above peasants' homes in Upper Egypt to ward off the evil eye. The lake is now an important destination for sportfishing, and Lake Nasser has fish of enormous size and weight—some more than 200 pounds (91 kilograms). Such large fish attract sportfishermen from around the world in competitions for the largest catch. Lake Nasser also has a wide variety of other fish for consumption. More than 100 types of fish live in the lake and river, including tilapia, perch, and catfish. The lake also attracts large numbers of migrating bird species.



**Lake Nasser flooded nearly all of Nubia both in Egypt and Sudan and stretches a total length of 340 miles (550 kilometers). (Corel)**

The completion of the Aswan High Dam led to the lake's waters flooding historic Nubia and the removal and resettlement of thousands of households in both Egypt and Sudan. The Egyptian government was to compensate the people forced to move with cash, new houses, and new lands to farm. Many Nubians felt the compensation was not enough, but there was no escaping the rising waters. It also became evident that much of ancient Egypt's heritage would also be lost because many sites in Nubia were threatened by the rising water. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) began the task of saving as many sites as possible. Twenty-two sites were rescued, including Abu Simbel, Philae, Kalabsha, and Amada. Others were removed and relocated in museums such as the Temples of Debod (in Madrid), Taffeh (in Leiden), and Dendur (New York). Still others, such as the famous fort at Buhen are now under the lake's waters. The UNESCO Nubian campaign cost millions of dollars, but most of the money was given by Western nations who now have their names associated with each saved monument.

Among the most spectacular save was the Temple of Abu Simbel. Between 1964 and 1968, the entire rock face was cut into smaller blocks and moved to a new site 213 feet (65 meters) above its original and 656 feet (200 meters) back from where the waters would eventually rise. A false hill was built to support the face of the temple, and it was oriented to allow the sun's rays to reach inside the temple twice a year—October 22 and February 22—or 60 days both before and after the winter and summer solstices.

The temple was located close to the modern border between Egypt and Sudan

and was deep within Nubia in ancient times. The temple is 143 miles (230 kilometers) south of Aswan. Aswan marked the end of Egyptian-controlled territory, and building such a colossal structure deep within Nubia was a sign of the pharaoh's power (Ramesses II ruled 1290–1224 BCE) and the religion of ancient Egypt. The fortress of Buhen marked the farthest point of control of Egypt over Nubia. Today it can be visited by boat, bus, or plane from Aswan.

Lake Nasser has regular ship service between Aswan and Wadi Halfa in Sudan. Wadi Halfa had been a sleepy town with a railway station and telegraph office built by the British during their reconquest of Sudan in 1895–98 before it became the relocation center for Sudanese Nubians from the waters of Lake Nasser. In addition, tour boats operate on the lake, but few of them land in Wadi Halfa and most return to Aswan after a stop at Abu Simbel.

**See also:** [Abu Simbel](#); [Aswan](#); [Nubians](#).

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## LAKE TANA

Located in the northwestern highlands of Ethiopia, Lake Tana is Ethiopia's largest body of water. From its southern tip the Blue Nile emerges to begin its journey to the sea, bringing with it the annual floods that support life along the Nile valley of Sudan and Egypt. Lake Tana is known for its island monasteries, which have both historical and religious importance. Although the lake has potential, development of hydroelectric power and irrigation has been slow in coming.

Lake Tana lies in a fertile, mountainous region at an elevation of 6,000 feet. It was formed millions of years ago when volcanic debris blocked the southern end of the shallow basin. The lake is 40 miles across at its widest and approximately 50 miles long with a mean depth of only 29 feet (“Lake Profile: Tana” 2003). The lake covers more than 1,000 square miles with a drainage area five times larger. Several rivers and many seasonal streams feed the lake, including the Little Abbai River, which begins as springs that are recognized to be the source of the Blue Nile. During the rainy season, May to September, the level of the lake can rise more than six feet, producing the Blue Nile floods.

Thirty-seven islands dot Lake Tana, many of which are home to important Coptic monasteries and churches, some dating to the 13th century CE. The monasteries were especially important in the 17th and 18th centuries when Gonder, a city near the lake, was the imperial capital. The monasteries are renowned for their paintings, hand-illustrated manuscripts and collections of crosses and other religious icons. They also hold the mummified remains of several important emperors along with their robes, jewels, and crowns. The fabled first emperor of Ethiopia, Menelik I, the legendary son of the biblical King Solomon and Queen of Sheba, is alleged to have brought the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem to an island in Lake Tana for safekeeping where it

stayed for 600 years until it was taken to the ancient city of Aksum. Saint Mary is also supposed to have rested at Lake Tana on her journey from Egypt to the Holy Land.

Lake Tana is an important natural resource for the highly populated surrounding areas. It provides water for domestic use and livestock and supports an important fishing industry. Farmers use traditional farming techniques and rely on rainfall to water their crops. Fishermen still fish the lake using ancient reed boats known as *tankwas*. Development of the lake's hydroelectric and irrigation potential has lagged. The lake was not properly mapped until the 1930s when British consul general, Major R. E. Cheesman, undertook mapping the Blue Nile system. He was the first modern geographer to circumnavigate the lake. Although a dam at the southern tip of the lake was proposed early in the 20th century, the Chara Chara Weir was not built until 1996. The weir evens out the seasonal flow of water from the lake and supports a nearby hydroelectric station. As Ethiopia develops its water resources, more development at Lake Tana is likely.

**See also:** [Blue Nile River](#); [Gonder](#); [Tis Isat Falls](#).



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## LAKE VICTORIA

Lake Victoria is Africa's largest lake with an area of 26,828 square miles (69,484 square kilometers) and the second largest freshwater lake in the world with only Lake Superior in North America being larger (“Lake Victoria Map” 2015). Lake Victoria is 210 miles (337 kilometers) long and 150 miles (240 kilometers) wide at its widest place. The lake's deepest known depth is 270 feet (82 meters) (“Lake Victoria” 2015). Its only outflow is at Jinja, where the White Nile River begins its journey as the Victoria Nile. Its largest affluent or tributary, the Kagera River, comes from the Rwandan and Burundian highlands. Other smaller rivers empty into the lake, with the Nile basin, including parts of Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi, and Rwanda before the Nile leaves the lake and is fed by other streams in Uganda.



Lake Victoria is Africa's largest lake by area, and is also the largest tropical lake in the world. There are many islands on Lake Victoria. ([Blossfeldia/Dreamstime.com](http://Blossfeldia/Dreamstime.com))

Known to the Arabs and Swahili ivory and slave traders as the Ukerewe, the Moroccan medieval geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi included it on his map of

the world in the 1160s as *Buhayrat al-Qamr* (“Moon Lake”) at the foot of the legendary *Jabal al-Qamr* or Mountains of the Moon. He thought that along with the Nile, the Niger River (called *al-Nil al-Sudan* or “Sudanese Nile”), flowed from the same lake. Local people gave the lake many names: Nalubaale in Luganda, Nyanza in Kinyarwanda, and Nam Lolwe in Luo.

British explorers also once debated whether Lake Tanganyika was also a source of the Nile. Richard Francis Burton and David Livingstone supported the theory that the Nile’s source would prove to be several lakes, including Lake Tanganyika. John Hanning Speke, who first spotted the lake from its southern end in 1858, named the lake in honor of Queen Victoria rather than keep one of its many local names; however, he did keep the local designation of Nyanza as Victoria Nyanza. Burton had been too ill to accompany Speke, and Burton tried to denigrate his former companion by questioning Speke’s competence as a surveyor and explorer and the fact that Speke did not speak any of the local languages. Speke had not gone around the lake, and his support came from officials of the Royal Geographic Society who financed a second voyage to confirm the source of the Nile.

During the second expedition, Speke was accompanied by James Augustus Grant, and they approached the lake from the west. Speke again was the person who saw the Victoria Nile exit the lake but again did not travel around the lake or follow the Nile far enough to confirm the lake as the source. Both Speke and Grant were frequently ill, and Grant suffered from a bacterial infection of the deep tissue in one of his legs that left him unable to walk for months. In 1862, Speke was the first European to see the Nile leave Lake Victoria and fall 12 feet (3.5 meters) over Ripon Falls, which he named for his patron, George Robinson, Lord Ripon. Although he would eventually be proven right, the illness of both European men and the fact local chiefs continued to plague them for passage payments (called *hongo*), Speke and Grant neither traveled around the lake nor followed the river downstream to discover Lake Kyogo or Lake Albert (Luta Nzige). In addition, Speke made an error in mapping the lake, thus “flooding” a mission station south of Gondokoro established by an Austrian missionary, Ignatius Knoblecher. Burton had allowed Speke to make the mistake to embarrass him (Jeal 2011, pp. 118–119). David Livingston was then sent to confirm or deny Speke’s affirmation of Lake Victoria as the source of the Nile, but Livingstone thought that Lake Tanganyika was one of a possible number of lakes or rivers as sources of the Nile, but instead his sources that flowed into the Congo basin. He died in 1873 while on his last expedition.

Confirmation of the Nile's source would be firmly established in Henry Morton Stanley's expedition between 1874 and 1877 when he traveled completely around both Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika and explored the Kagera River, also noted by Speke in his second expedition (1860–64), to confirm that it flows only to Lake Victoria. Later, in 1889, Stanley explored the Semliki River, which flows into Lake Albert, and discovered the smaller Lake Edward. Stanley also confirmed that the rains and snows of the Ruwenzori Mountains indeed flow into the Nile via the Semliki River (Twigger 2013, p. 335).

With the sources of the Nile established, the British empire was quick to follow. The country's imperial ambition to control the Nile's waters were echoed by the Egyptians, who pushed as far south as possible. British interests were threatened only once by France in 1899, but the French withdrew because they were not willing to fight a war over the Nile. Germany was the only real threat, and it had established control over parts of East Africa and inland into Burundi and Rwanda but would lose them after World War I. Britain took over German East Africa as the colony of Tanganyika, putting the whole lake under British control. Today, Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika and the island of Zanzibar) has the largest share of Lake Victoria followed by Uganda. The smallest share belongs to Kenya. Late in the colonial era, Britain developed a series of treaties over the use of water from the lake, and Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya signed similar divisions of the water at independence to not harm the flow to Egypt. Egypt's cotton harvest was important for British colonial interests, and these treaties guaranteed water flows to the north. None of the other countries could reduce the flow of the Nile, and the dams on the Victoria Nile are for electricity for Uganda and Kenya. Treaties allowing the construction of these dams were calculated for a steady flow of the Nile to Egypt and Sudan based on the river's flow in the early part of the 20th century.

**See also:** [Bujagali Falls](#); [Burton, Sir Richard Francis](#); [Grant, James Augustus](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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## **LANE, EDWARD WILLIAM (1801–1876)**

Edward William Lane was an important Orientalist (scholar) of the 19th century whose works are still of major value. Born to a wealthy English family and educated mainly at home, he studied Arabic and worked as an engraver. Suffering ill health and a near fatal fever, he left England for a warmer, sunnier destination and turned to Egypt. In late 1825, he landed in Egypt and threw himself into the task of studying the Arabic language and Islamic law.

Lane fell deeply in love with Egypt and its people. He dressed, ate, and spoke so much like an Egyptian that his local friends forgot he was not an Arab. His ability to immerse himself in Egyptian culture was so complete that his book *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, first published in 1836, continues to be reissued more than 180 years after his initial research. It remains a standard for those who want to know more about Egypt and Cairo in particular.

Lane returned to England in 1828 and set about writing his most famous work, *Manners and Customs*. In 1838, he published his translation of the book *Alf Laylah wa Laylah* or *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, but he was sensitive to Victorian tastes and did not include the sexual content that his contemporary, Sir Richard Burton, deliberately maintained. In 1840, Lane married a Greek–Egyptian girl, Nafisah, whom he had purchased while in Cairo when she was eight years old. He was some 20 years older than his wife, but in Victorian society the age difference was less of an issue than the fact he had married a former slave.

In 1842, Lane returned to Egypt and brought his sister, Sophie Lane-Poole, with him so he could access the *harim* (women’s quarters) and have a better understanding of Egyptian women. She also wrote an account of her experiences in *The Englishwoman in Egypt*. During his second stay in Egypt, Lane began to work on a dictionary translating Arabic words into English. This work would be completed by his nephew, Stanley Lane-Poole, who was an accomplished Orientalist himself between 1877 to 1893. It was based on the medieval and

classical Arabic dictionary *Taj al-‘Arus* or *Crown of the Bride* by al-Zabidi (1732–1790). Lane left his work with his friend Shaykh al-Disuqi when he returned to England in 1849. In 1843, Lane’s work on the Koran was published in England but was full of errors and misprints. These were corrected by his nephew and the book was reissued in 1879.

After returning to England, Lane continued his work on Egypt, the Arabic language, and history and was a major figure in the development of Middle Eastern studies. Although never recognized by any British university for his work, he was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Leiden in Holland before his death. He died at his home in England in 1876.

**See also:** [Cairo](#).

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## LUXOR

Luxor (or *al-Uqsar* in Arabic) means “the palaces” and was named for the large number of pharaonic ruins in and around the city on both banks of the Nile. Called *Waset*, *Ta-ipet*, or *Ipet Resyt* by the ancient Egyptians, the Greeks named it *Thebai* because *Ta-ipet* sounded like their city of Thebes. The Arabs who arrived later were astonished by the huge number of standing ancient temples and gave the city its modern name of al-Uqsar, which was modified by foreign visitors to the more easily pronounced Luxor. Today Luxor has a population of slightly more than 500,000 people and is the capital of the local province, which is also called Luxor.

Tourism plays an important part in the local economy, but the region also is a major producer of agriculture, especially of sugar cane. During the Mubarak era, plans were advanced to turn the town into a gigantic open museum with five-star hotels, new roads, shops and bazaars, and an IMAX theater. Plans were developed to excavate and then stand all of the sphinx statues along the processional way from the Temple of Luxor to the Temple of Karnak. The excavations began in 2004 and continue today. In 1998, a new toll bridge linked the two banks of the river, with tourists asked to pay more per car than Egyptians. Before the bridge, river ferries or feluccas were used to cross, and many people still prefer them today. Tourism was seriously affected when 64 people, mostly tourists, were killed by Islamic fundamentalist gunmen in 1997. In 2013, 19 tourists died in a hot-air balloon crash. Tourism declined significantly with these incidents, but slowly tourism seems to be once again on the rise.



**The Nile River at Luxor, across from the cliffs where the Valley of the Kings lies. The Valley of the Kings contains the tombs of pharaohs from the New Kingdom. (John A. Shoup)**

The ruins of ancient Luxor are among the most impressive in Egypt. Like the Great Pyramids of Giza, they are among the must-see places in the country. In the heart of the modern city is the Temple of Luxor, which has been used as a temple to the Egyptian gods Hathor and the Thebean triad of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 86). This temple seems to predate the 18th Dynasty, but it is with the 18th Dynasty that Amenhotep III (ruled 1390–1352 BCE) built the inner part. It was rebuilt and added onto, with Alexander the Great making the last additions. The temple was named *Ipet Resyt* and served later as a place for the Romans to worship the imperial religion of the emperor under Dioclectian (ruled 284–305 CE). One inner chapel was used to store imperial emblems of the legions, and until the late 19th century the chapel had beautiful paintings that are nearly gone now. In the Ayyubid period (13th century) the mosque of the Sufi mystic Abu Hajjaj (locally, Haggag) was built and still functions (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 86). Every year, Abu Hajjaj is borne around the temple in a sun boat to honor his arrival in Luxor by boat. The day is festive and cross dressing is allowed, not unlike the celebrations of the ancient Egyptians. The procession seems to be a vestige of the ancient practice of once a year bringing out the sun boat to carry the image of Amun to Karnak and back. Local legend says that Abu Hajjaj fought the local queen who was a pagan; once he had defeated her, he was able to convert the people to Islam. The legend may have some truth to it, but Islam was well established in Egypt by the time of Abu Hajjaj, and the local leader would have been a Copt, not a pagan.

North of the Temple of Luxor is the great Temple of Karnak, or *Ipet Isut* as the ancient Egyptians called it. This is one of the most impressive ancient ruins, covering a large area; it was built and added on to for more than 2,000 years. The earliest temples are those of Montu and Ra, date perhaps to the 11th



Dynasty (2055–1985 BCE) of the Middle Kingdom period (Ikram 2011, p. 87). In fact, there are three main temples; that of Amun Ra-Horakhty, Montu, and Mut though the main temple is dedicated to Amun Ra. Inside that temple is another temple to Khonsu. An additional temple was dedicated to Aten by the heretical Pharaoh Akhenaten (ruled 1352–1336) but was destroyed long ago. Karnak was linked to Luxor temple by way of a street lined with sphinxes, whereas the Karnak temple was connected to the Temple of Mut by a street lined with statues of Amun Ra's wife Mut as a lion-headed woman (Ikram 2011, p. 125).

The main temple was dedicated to the main god of Egypt before the arrival of Christianity. As such, every ruling pharaoh into the Roman era added something to it. Each pharaoh left a magnificent legacy in hypostyle halls, entrance pylons, and chapels. Equal attention was paid to the boathouses. Canals that linked the Temples of Mut and Montu to the Nile and helped fill the sacred lake inside the Temple of Amun Ra. Ramesses II (ruled 1279–1232 BCE) commemorated his military expeditions on the walls of the temple and built immense and massive columns of himself with his children sheltering between his legs. The temple has numerous carved reliefs that declare the names of the pharaohs and their accomplishments, some of them reclaimed by later pharaohs. Among the most magnificent of ruins is the great hypostyle hall, a forest of 134 massive columns built by Seti I (ruled 1296–1279 BCE) and his son, Ramesses II. Some of the columns of Seti I still have highlights of the original color. The hypostyle hall is famous and has served as a setting for both Egyptian and American films.

Across the Nile on the west bank are large numbers of massive monuments to the Theban dynasties. These include the famous Colossi of Memnon or, more correctly Amenhotep III (ruled 1390–1352 BCE). These two massive statues stood originally at the entrance to Amenhotep's funerary temple, which has disappeared. Madinat al-Habu, or *Tjemet* in ancient Egyptian, was a temple dedicated to Pharaoh Ramesses III (ruled 1184–1155 BCE), but it was built over the top of a temple dedicated to Amun by Hatshepsut (ruled 1472–1457 BCE) and Tuthmosis III (ruled 1479–1424 BCE). It also had subsequent expansions over the centuries into the Roman period. On its walls is the depiction of Pharaoh Ramesses III's victories over the Libyans and the Sea People (Oakes and Gahlin 2003, p. 197). Nearby are the ruins of the workers' village called *Dayr al-Madinah*. Here it is possible to glimpse the lives of the workers who built the tombs and temples on the west bank of the Nile. Not far away are the tombs of the pharaonic queens in the Valley of the Queens, or *Biban al-Harim*.

Among the 80 tombs excavated, the most famous was that of Nefertari, wife of Ramesses II. The modern town of al-Gurnah sits atop many private tombs from the New Kingdom period, among which is that of Sennedjem, which is most famous for its paintings depicting Sennedjem and his wife, Iyneferti, in vivid detail. In the 1960s, the Egyptian government tried to move the people to New Gurnah and hired famous Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy, but the new village was not “modern” enough—being built from mud brick—to induce residents to abandon their houses. Mubarak’s government also tried to move them to stop the tombs from being plundered, but the effort was equally unsuccessful.

The Ramesseum, or *Khnemt-waset*, the funeral temple for Pharaoh Ramesses II, is also found on the west bank. Ramesses II declared his “victory” over the Hittites at the Battle of Qadish in modern Syria. Although the pharaoh showed himself as the victor, he was actually forced to sign the world’s first known international peace treaty, leaving most of Syria in the hands of the Hittites. The Greek Diodorus called it the Temple of Osymandyas because of Ramesses’s throne name, Userma’atre’ (Baines and Målek 1990, p. 97). The fallen, broken statue of him inspired English poet Percy Shelly to write his famous sonnet in 1817 (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 369). Other mortuary temples include Dayr al-Madinah (called *Djeser-djeseru* by the ancients). This is the mortuary temple of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut, which used the site of an earlier temple for Pharaoh Montuhotep, or *Akh-isut*. Hatshepsut did not usurp his combined temple and tomb but built hers next to his. Hers is so much bigger that his is lost in comparison. Her successor, Tuthomsis III, built a temple to the god Amun between the two, although Hatshepsut’s eclipses both. Significant in her temple are the reliefs that show her sea expedition to the Horn of Africa, the country of Punt. In front of her temple, she planted some of the rare trees brought back from Punt, and even today a few of the trunks remain in the ground.

Luxor is rightly famous for the Valley of the Kings, *Biban al-Muluk*, where the kings of several dynasties were buried. The site was perhaps chosen because the mountain that stands in front has the shape of a pyramid, and the setting sun over the mountain looks like the ancient symbol of the journey taken by the soul to the afterlife. The valley contains 62 known tombs (Strudwick 2006, p. 276). Excavation of the tombs began in the late 18th century with the arrival of Napoleon’s expedition (Reeves and Wilkinson 2005, p. 54). The French visited and mapped 17 of the tombs and began the numbering system still in use today. Following the withdrawal of French forces, one remained to become the new French counsel, and he and his British counterpart began a competition to see

who could collect the most. The British counsel, Henry Salt, employed Giovanni Belzoni, who was a glorified tomb robber and not an excavator. Nonetheless, he was a skilled draftsman and produced the first good drawings of tomb decoration. Auguste Mariette headed Egypt's Department of Antiquities, and he began the modern era of proper excavation with the goal of learning from the remains rather than robbing the tombs of whatever was left (Reeves and Wilkinson 2005, p. 67). Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of Tutankamun in 1922 caused a world sensation and began "Egyptomania," the craze over everything Egyptian, including the new medium of film ("KV-5" 1998).

In 1881, high in the rock cliffs above Dayr al-Bahri, a cache of royal mummies was found from the 17th to 21st dynasties. Put there in antiquity, the cache had been located and occasionally robbed of pieces of treasure that could be sold on the local market. The secret was kept by 'Abd al-Rasul Ahmad from the local village of Gurnah. News of the discovery soon reached the authorities, and Gaston Maspero, head of the Department of Antiquities, had the cache emptied and the mummies transferred to the Cairo Museum. In all, some 53 mummies were found, including those of Seti I, Ramesses II, Ramesses III, Hatshepsut, and Tuthmosis I, II, and III (Reeves and Wilkinson 2005, p. 196). When the mummies were taken to the river for shipping to Cairo, the local women began to wail, and the wailing continued in nearly every village until the ship reached Cairo. The story was made into a famous 1969 Egyptian film by Shadi 'Abd al-Salam called *al-Mummiya* or *The Night of Counting the Years*.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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# M

## **MAHMUDIYYAH CANAL**

The Mahmudiyyah Canal is 45 miles (72 kilometers) long and brings water to the Mediterranean port of Alexandria. Starting at the Nile River port of Mahmudiyyah, it connects Alexandria with fresh river water as well as allows river traffic to bring goods to and from Alexandria and Cairo. The canal was first built in the Mamluk era, according to the Moroccan traveler ibn Batuta, who noted such a canal connection to Alexandria in 1326. According to ibn Batuta, the canal had been finished only a few years before his visit. The current canal was constructed by Muhammad ‘Ali in 1817 and was cut through desert lands recently reclaimed by ‘Ali. The older canal may have been so silted up and covered by sand that no visible trace was left.

The canal was finished in 1820 and named after Sultan Mahmud II (ruled 1808–1839), the Ottoman sultan recognizing Egypt as an Ottoman province. However, by 1839 the canal was in danger of being buried by desert sands, so it was cleaned during the reign of Sa‘id (ruled 1854–1863), and traffic could flow again.

During the 19th century, the canal was heavily used to move Egypt’s cotton production to Alexandria for export. After the Suez Canal was closed following the 1967 War with Israel, Alexandria became Egypt’s main Mediterranean port because Port Sa‘id was closed. The canal was critically important for trade and shipping between the Mediterranean and Cairo because all of Egypt’s exports had to be moved to Alexandria by either rail or ship. Although the Suez Canal was reopened, the canal zone has many businesses because it is a free trade area. The port of Alexandria remains the most important port for the country and the canal an important link.

**See also:** [Alexandria](#); [Muhammad ‘Ali](#).

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## MALAKAL

Malakal is the capital of the Upper Nile State in South Sudan and was the scene of some of the worst fighting in the civil war of 2013–15. The population is around 140,000 inhabitants, although the number is hard to gauge given the recently ended conflict. Officially, the state has a population of 160,000 (“Where Is Malakal?” n.d.). The census taken in 2008 was subject to dispute because it was carried out by the (northern) government for the vote on independence. Most of the people around the town are ethnic Dinka. The town is located on the White Nile close to the mouth of the Sobat River and the border between South Sudan and Ethiopia. It is linked by a paved road to Ethiopia to the east, and another links it south to Juba. However, most traffic is on the White Nile River.

Malakal developed as a colonial town under the British. During the period of Sudanese independence, it became a garrison town occupied by northern troops. Following the vote for independence, the province of the Upper Nile was part of the new state of South Sudan. Malakal served as the site for several agreements signed between the Sudanese government and the Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Army (SPLA). Following South Sudan’s independence from the north, Malakal saw some of the worst fighting between the Dinka and the Nuer; the two largest ethnic groups in South Sudan. The town passed from one side to the other at least a dozen times and was nearly a ghost town of burned out buildings (Franks 2015) Today, Malakal is nearly abandoned and its population has fled to refugee camps.

**See also:** [Dinka](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Juba](#); [Nuer](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## MANSURAH

Mansura or Mansurah—also spelled Mansoura—is a city in the Nile River delta region of Egypt and is the capital of al-Daqhaliyyah Province. Today it has a population of one-half million. It lies on the east bank of the Damietta branch of the Nile 74 miles (120 kilometers) northeast of Cairo. The city was founded in 1219 by the Ayybid Sultan al-Kamil (ruled 1218–1238) as a military camp to counter the Fifth Crusade (1213–1221). The Crusaders besieged the city of Damietta, and the sultan brought his forces to an island in the Nile that was well protected from attack. From Mansurah, he was able to launch attacks against the Crusader army. Damietta was besieged from 1218 and finally fell in 1220. In 1221, the Crusaders marched toward Cairo and were met by al-Kamil's forces and nearly destroyed. Al-Kamil negotiated peace, and Damietta was returned to control by the Ayyubids (ruled 1171–1250). Eight years of peace followed, and a piece of the true cross, a holy relic, was allegedly returned, although it is doubtful that al-Kamil actually had it. After the victory over the Crusaders, the camp and the subsequent town were called *Mansurah*, meaning victorious. Some say the name was given later as part of the celebrations for the defeat of the Seventh Crusade (1248–1254).

During the Fifth Crusade, St. Francis of Assisi traveled to Egypt and was given permission to cross the lines in an attempt to convert al-Kamil to Christianity. The attempt failed, but St. Francis was treated with respect by the sultan, who seemed amused with the monk's efforts.

In the Seventh Crusade, the Crusaders again attacked the city of Damietta. The Ayyubid Sultan al-Salih Najm al-Din (ruled 1240–1249) again brought his army north to meet them. The Crusaders were led by the King of France, Saint Louis IX (ruled 1226–1270), who was captured in the close street fighting in Mansurah. Local legend has it that a Sufi mystic, Ahmad al-Badawi, captured

the King. The Ayyubid Sultan had died in 1249, and three of his Mamluk *amirs*—Aybek, Qutuz, and Baybars—and his wife, Shajarat al-Durr, kept his death a secret to keep the morale of the army up as they waited for the sultan's son, Turan Shah, to arrive from Syria. Turan Shah was unpopular with the Mamalik (plural of *Mamluk*), who eventually murdered him in 1250.

The Mamalik used gunpowder against the Crusaders to create confusion, and the mounted knights were dealt death blows from Mamalik positioned on rooftops. The French king was captured and held prisoner until the Crusaders left Egypt and paid a ransom for him. King Louis IX was held in a local house, now called *bayt Luqman* (“House of Luqman”) located next to the mosque of Sidi ‘Abd Allah al-Mu‘afi in the heart of the old city. The mosque was built by the Ayyubid Sultan al-Salih Najm al-Din in 1248. The mosque was refurbished in the Ottoman period, and little remains of the original. The House of Luqman today may not be the original either, although it is hard to say how much remains. It has become a museum with a panorama of the battle and Crusader armor and weapons on display.

In the 19th century, Mansurah benefited from the production of cotton and became a major trade center for cotton. Like other delta cities, Mansurah felt the economic boom brought by Muhammad ‘Ali’s policies on cotton and canal building to irrigate larger areas of land in the delta. Across the river from Mansurah is the port of Talkha, once an independent city but now part of Mansurah. Mansurah is a textile center with many factories turning cotton into thread and then cloth. Mansurah once had a fairly large Greek population that contributed to the businesses of the town until the Nasir era, when many were forced to leave because of change in Egyptian citizenship rules; at least one grandparent had to be born in Egypt to qualify.

Mansurah University was established in 1962 to help reduce the pressure of students at Cairo University. It also has a branch of the national library open to the public.

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [Muhammad ‘Ali](#).

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## MENELIK II (1889–1913)

Menelik II, emperor of Ethiopia, is one of the most important monarchs in that nation’s history. He is credited with establishing the modern borders of the country, keeping Ethiopia independent from European colonization, and beginning the process of modernization.

Before becoming emperor, Menelik was king of the powerful province of Shewa in the southeastern highlands. In 1868, at the death of Emperor Tewodros II, Menelik had been a contender for the imperial throne but eventually gave his allegiance to his archrival Yohannes IV. While Yohannes was fighting off foreign invasions in the north, Menelik began to accumulate territory and arms. Defeating the rival king of the western province of Gojjam, he was able to gain control of the rich lands south and southwest of the Blue Nile, a source of gold, ivory, slaves, and other valuable trade articles. He then extended his territory south and southeast into the Muslim regions of Bale, Ogaden, and Sidamo; today these lands form the southern borders of Ethiopia. These acquisitions gave him easy access to the ports along the Gulf of Aden, which were then controlled by Italy. Establishing a treaty of friendship with Italy, Menelik was able to export slaves to Arabia and import huge quantities of firearms.

On the death of Yohannes IV in 1889, Menelik agreed to allow Italian control of the Eritrean Highlands in return for supporting him as emperor. With Italian backing and little opposition, Menelik was crowned Menelik II in 1889 and established his capital at Addis Ababa in Shewa. Addis Ababa remains the modern capital of Ethiopia.

Eritrea was declared an Italian colony in 1890. Not content with this, however, the Italians seized the adjacent Ethiopian province of Tigray. To stop

the Italian aggression, Menelik called up an army to which every province sent warriors. Menelik's army met the Italians at Adwa in Tigray on March 1, 1896. After fierce fighting and heavy casualties on both sides, the Italians retreated, giving the victory to Menelik. The Battle of Adwa is the most important single event that kept Ethiopia independent during the European scramble for Africa. After the battle, Europe recognized Ethiopian independence, and the established borders more or less remained.

With the prestige he gained from the victory at Adwa, Menelik was able to solidify his internal authority and, taking advantage of the rare peace that followed along with foreign assistance, embarked on modernization projects. Roads and bridges were built, a postal service was developed, and telephones and a telegraph system were installed. Most important of all, a railway was built that eventually linked Addis Ababa to French Djibouti. Addis Ababa, the site of many modernization projects such as schools, a hospital, banks, and hotels, grew rapidly. For the first time since ancient Aksum, coins were minted.

Menelik's failing health produced uncertainty for his succession. On his death in 1913, his grandson briefly took the throne but was soon deposed. In 1916, Menelik's daughter Zawditu became empress, but the real power was her regent and heir *Ras* Tafari, later Haile Selassie I.

**See also:** [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Haile Selassie I](#); [Yohannes IV](#).

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## MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM (R. 1977–1991)

Mengistu Haile Mariam was an Ethiopian dictator who established a socialist government after a 1974 coup dethroned Emperor Haile Selassie I. Mengistu's reign was one of turmoil, economic upheaval, and violence that left the country bankrupt.

Mengistu was born in 1937 of mixed ethnicity and was known as a troublemaker. He was sent to the Holeta Military Academy and later to the United States for training, where he developed anti-American and socialist views. Returning to Ethiopia, he was assigned as a major to the army's Third Division in Harar.

By the early 1970s, popular unrest against the imperial government had spread to the military. An armed forces committee known as the *Derg* was formed in February 1974 to address military issues, and it gradually became more radical and political. Mengistu, a representative from Harar, became one of its dominant figures. The Derg slowly began to undermine the government and took control of the news media, arrested prominent ministers, and eliminated the emperor's advisory councils. Finally, in September 1974 Haile Selassie was deposed. The emperor later died, possibly murdered on Mengistu's orders.

The Derg formed a provisional government and embarked on transforming Ethiopia into a communist state. Initially, Mengistu was elected first vice chairman of the new government, but through a violent surge of executions, imprisonments, and shootouts, he eliminated his opponents within the Derg and in February 1977 became chairman and head of state. Mengistu turned to the Soviet Union to bolster his government and was able to defeat an invasion from Somalia in 1978 and contain regional liberation movements with the help of Russian and Cuban aid. Civilian opposition to military rule was violently crushed through the "Red Terror" campaign of 1977–78. Derg-sponsored urban militias killed thousands of civilians suspected of opposing the government.

Mengistu headed a centralized, repressive, and bureaucratic government. Financial institutions, industry and commerce, and rural and urban lands were all

nationalized. Urban and peasant associations were set up to spread the revolution and control the population. Resettlement programs and collective farming were introduced. In 1984, Mengistu announced with great fanfare the formation of the Workers Party of Ethiopia. Following a new constitution, the Peoples Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was declared in 1987. Mengistu became the country's first president and assumed sweeping authority.

Mengistu's support, however, was declining. A severe famine in 1983–84 killed millions while the government withheld aid from restive regions. Policies of forced relocation and villagization angered the peasant population, and the government's economic policies were failing. Discontent among the military grew over endless campaigns against regional unrest. An unsuccessful coup in 1989 led to the execution of many high-ranking officers and a further weakened army. By the late 1980s, ethnic liberation fronts in Eritrea and the northern province of Tigray began to win victories over government forces. By 1990, Mengistu's government was in trouble. Joining together, the liberation fronts advanced on the capital, Addis Ababa. With his government on the verge of collapse, Mengistu altered policies and tried unsuccessfully to negotiate. On May 21, 1991, he fled to Zimbabwe. A few days later, the Derg government collapsed.

**See also:** [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Haile Selassie I.](#)

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## MEROE

The Sudanese town of Meroe is located on the Nile River 200 miles (322 kilometers) north of Khartoum. It lies just to the south of the juncture of the Atbara River with the Nile in the region known as the Butuna. No doubt the region in ancient times was a producer of agricultural goods and livestock. Ancient Nubia relied heavily on livestock, especially cattle and cattle products, but also *durah* (millet) was harvested rather than wheat. The agricultural fields were expanded by use of irrigation canals, and water was brought up from the Nile using a waterwheel (*saqiya* in Arabic) not unlike those used in Sudan and Egypt today.

Meroe was the capital of the Kingdom of Kush or Napata from 800 BCE to 350 BCE (Oakes and Gahlin 2003, p. 341). Called *Medawi* or *Bedawi* in deciphered texts, it was called *Meroé* in Greek and *Maruwah* in Arabic. The city is famous for its Nubian pyramids and hosts some 200 pyramids in groups of three. During the 25th Dynasty (747–656 BCE), the rulers were from Kush; once they had conquered Egypt, they moved north to Thebes, which became the capital. The height of the 25th Dynasty was during the rule of Taharqa (throne name Khunefertemre), who ruled from 690 to 664 BCE. He made major improvements to the Temple of Khons at Karnak (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 335; Strudwick 2006, p. 325). The Kushite kings were challenged by the 26th Dynasty, whose rulers were native Egyptians from the Nile River delta city of Sais but were puppets of the Assyrians. The Kushite kings withdrew into Sudan, where they continued to rule until the Roman era (Ikram 2011, p. 109; Strudwick 2006, p. 94).

During the Roman era, Egypt suffered numerous raids from Meroe. In 23 BCE, the Roman governor of Egypt, Gaius Publius Petronius, invaded Meroe to

force an end to the raids. Failing to capture the ruler, Queen Imanaret, he burned the city of Napata to the ground before returning to Egypt. Under the rule of Augustus, the Nubian Kingdom became an ally of Rome, and in 61 CE Nero sent an expedition up the Nile to find its source using guides supplied by Meroe. The expedition reached the Sudd but was unable to penetrate it and returned. By the end of the second century CE, Meroe had declined and was no longer a power.

Meroe's ruins were first described by French naturalist and explorer Frédéric Cailliaud in 1821. It was an impressive place with large numbers of steep pyramids. Although Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt took note of the pyramids, he was unable to visit them because of his traveling companions (Moorehead 2000, p. 179). Cailliaud accompanied the Egyptian invasion of Sudan as did several other Europeans. He also found an inscription in Latin that has proven to be the farthest south of anything with written Latin (Moorehead 2000, p. 202). The first pyramid in Nubia was built by and for the ruler Piye (Pianky), who died in 716 BCE (Ikram 2011, p. 109). He preferred to be buried in his native Nubia rather than in Egypt.

Among the items found in an archeological excavation of a temple was a stone head of Emperor Augustus taken as war booty by the Nubians when they sacked Aswan (then called Syene) in 25 BCE. Originally found under the steps of the temple, the head is now in the British Museum. In the first decades of the Anglo-British rule in Sudan, interest in the ruins grew and more scientific expeditions conducted their own excavations in the early 1900s. Meroe seems to have produced a good deal of iron, tools, and weapons, and because large numbers of smelters for refining raw iron ore have been found, archeologists have named it the "Birmingham of Africa." It was known to India and China through trade on the Indian Ocean. It also exported fine textiles and jewelry in gold as well as "exotic" African animals.

The people worshipped the gods of the ancient Egyptians as well as their own. They built temples and shrines to the gods and to local people who became deified (Bagnall and Rathbone 2008, p. 246–248). Archeologists have found inscriptions in Meroitic as far north as Kalabsha in Egyptian Nubia. The shrine built around 15 CE at Dendur (also in Egyptian Nubia) was turned into a Christian church in 577 CE and was finally abandoned in the 13th century (Bagnall and Rathbone 2008, p. 248). The shrine was threatened by the rising waters of Lake Nasser, so it was removed and rebuilt in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Meroitic language died out in the fourth century and



was replaced in inscriptions by Coptic because most of the region became Christian. Today, the Sudanese government discourages visits to site, although trips are still possible.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Ancient Kush and Nubia](#); [Nubians](#); [Pharaonic Temples](#).

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## MUHAMMAD AHMAD, THE MAHDI (C. 1844–1885)

Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Abdallah was born in 1844 or 1845 in Dongola in northern Sudan, where his family built boats. The family claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad through Hasan, the eldest son of ‘Ali and the Prophet’s daughter, Fatimah. In his early childhood, Muhammad Ahmad’s family moved closer to Khartoum, where his father was able to find a better supply of wood for his boat-building business. Muhammad Ahmad demonstrated a keen interest and ability in religious studies and became a student of three important Sufi masters in succession: Shaykh al-Amin Suwaylih, Shaykh Muhammad al-Dikayr ‘Abdallah Khujali, and Shaykh Sharif Nur al-Da’im, who Muhammad Ahmad stayed with for seven years. Shaykh Sharif was the direct descendant of the founder of the *Samaniyyah tariqah* (Sufi Brotherhood), and Muhammad Ahmad quickly gained deeper knowledge of the religion. Shaykh Sharif began to send him out on missions and gave him the right to bestow membership in the tariqah to others.

In 1870, Muhammad Ahmad’s family moved to Aba Island in the White Nile River south of Khartoum. Muhammad Ahmad founded a mosque on the island and began to preach and induct locals into the *Saminiyyah* order. In 1872, Muhammad Ahmad invited his master, Sharif Nur al-Da’im, to come to al-Aradayb on the western shore of the Nile across from Aba Island. Between 1872 and 1878, the master became jealous of his student’s popularity and eventually the two fell out in a quarrel over music and dancing at the shaykh’s sons’ circumcision celebrations. Muhammad Ahmad publicly denounced such celebrations, and the shaykh then expelled his student from the order. When it became clear to Muhammad Ahmad that his master would never accept him back, he went to a rival leader of the Samaniyyah, Shaykh al-Qurayshi wad al-Zayn, who accepted him and his followers.

After being accepted by al-Qurayshi, Muhammad Ahmad began traveling to al-‘Ubayd in the province of Kordofan, where people proclaimed they received *barakah* (divine blessings) from him at his sermons. When al-Qurayshi died in 1878, Muhammad Ahmad was in a strong position to take over the leadership role, and his followers and those of al-Qurayshi soon regarded him as their new leader.

In 1881, Muhammad Ahmad announced that he was the expected *Mahdi*, or guide who would come before the return of the Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) and set the world back on the straight path of righteousness. The Mahdi is central to Islam, and leaders of the Samaniyyah had long been preparing their followers for such an appearance. Muhammad Ahmad claimed to have had powerful visions in which the Prophet Muhammad had taken him before the heavenly council called the *al-Hadrah al-Nabawiyyah* (“Assembly of the Prophet”) and was told that he was selected as and would be known through a number of signs as the Mahdi. Islam expects periodic internal renewal, and the role of a *mujadid* (or renewer in this case) was combined with that of the Mahdi. Some who accepted Muhammad Ahmad accepted him as a renewer of Islam if not as the Mahdi.

Most of the Sufi shaykhs and their followers accepted him as the Mahdi almost as soon as word of his announcement reached them with the notable exception of the Khatamiyyah, who remained loyal to Turko–Egyptian rule. The religious scholars, mostly from al-Azhar, who educated and associated with Turko–Egyptian authorities not only rejected the claim but also ridiculed him personally, although not the idea of the Mahdi. His condemnation of the Ottoman sultan made him unpopular with most of the educated scholars of the day. Nonetheless, the general masses were eager to accept him, partly because they wanted to rid themselves of Turko–Egyptian control. Among his first and most loyal supporters was ‘Abdullahi ibn Muhammad al-Ta‘ishi; his Baggarah Bedouin troops would prove to be the backbone of the newly emerging state.

In 1881, the Egyptian authorities decided to arrest Muhammad Ahmad on the charge of spreading false religious ideas. Two hundred soldiers were sent to Aba Island to arrest him; it was hoped the number of armed troops would deter any action by his followers. The well-armed soldiers were met with a shower of rocks and spears, however, and ran back to their boats without the Mahdi (Moorehead 2000, p. 228). The Mahdi then left Aba Island for the great expanse of Kordofan.

In 1882, Egyptian authorities put together a force of 10,000 men under the command of Colonel William Hicks, formerly of the Indian army, to march into

the desert to end the rebellion. In 1883, the army advanced up the Nile from Egypt; Hicks's men were well armed with machine guns, artillery, and millions of rounds of ammunition (Moorehead 2000, p. 232). The Mahdi and his men waited near al-'Ubayd, which they had taken from the Egyptian garrison, as the mass of men and camels labored to cross the desert. Hicks's army became lost and was short on water through the guides' carelessness or through a deliberate trick. When the two armies eventually met near al-'Ubayd, the hapless British officer lost the entirety of Egypt's last field army nearly to the last man. Now the Mahdi not only had the arms and ammunition of the al-'Ubayd garrison but also that of the Hicks expedition. The Mahdi commanded more than 40,000 well-armed men able to threaten the Egyptians in Khartoum (Barthorp 1988, p. 80).

The British government of Prime Minister William Gladstone did not want to spend more money on another war so soon after ending the 'Urabi Revolt in 1882. As a cheaper way of helping Egypt evacuate its civilian and military personnel, the government decided to send General Charles ("Chinese") Gordon to Khartoum. The English thought that Gordon was a hero to the Sudanese and did not understand that many Sudanese had been offended by Gordon and his preference for Christians while he had been governor from 1877 to 1879 (Collins 2008, p. 20).

In 1884, General Gordon left England for Sudan but stopped in Cairo for both his official *friman* (orders) from the khedive as well as to meet his former enemy, Sudanese slaver Rahma Mansur al-Zubayr. Gordon knew al-Zubayr to be a fine soldier and proposed to turn control over Sudan to him in an effort to defeat the Mahdi. Al-Zubayr was well informed about the events in Sudan, even while living in exile in Cairo, and refused. Gordon arrived in Khartoum to find both the proposed evacuation and defense against the Mahdi equally impossible.

In October 1884, the Mahdi arrived across the river and set up his camp where the modern city of Omdurman would later grow. The Mahdi's forces cut off contact with Egypt when the town of Berber fell and cut off telegraph connections. Gordon was forced to use his steamers to continue communications with Cairo and London, but they had to run a gauntlet of enemy positions. Gordon was able to hold out until January 1885 when Khartoum fell to an assault. During the siege, Gordon and the Mahdi developed a strange relationship, with the Mahdi sending Gordon the clothes of an ascetic Sufi and an invitation to join him; the two exchanged courteous messages (Moorehead 2000, p. 259). When Khartoum fell, Gordon was killed, and his head was displayed in Omdurman. Khartoum, the richest town in Sudan, was looted for

two days before the Mahdi restored order.

Many of the *amirs* or commanders took over houses in Khartoum, but the Mahdi had a rambling mud brick palace built in Omdurman instead. According to some accounts, his chief legal wife, 'A'ishah, became the real master of his household (Moorehead 2000, p. 305). The Mahdi grew fat and only attended affairs of state when forced to. Five months after Gordon's death, the Mahdi died of poisoning or from typhus or smallpox (Moorehead 2000, p. 307). Some followers developed a story that the Mahdi had foretold he would not survive Gordon's death should the British general be killed. (In fact, the Mahdi had ordered that Gordon be taken alive, and this is played for dramatic effect in the 1966 film *Khartoum*.) The short life of Muhammad Ahmad was pivotal for Sudan and set out the conflicts in the north between his family and followers in the form of the Ummah Party against other political parties as well as the conflict between the north and the south. He left a profound legacy for Sudan.

**See also:** [Gordon, Charles George](#); [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Islam on the Nile](#); [Sufism and Sufi Brotherhoods](#).

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## MUHAMMAD ‘ALI (1769–1849)

Muhammad ‘Ali was the ruler of Egypt from 1805 until his death in 1849. Muhammad ‘Ali was born in Kavala (modern Greece) of Albanian descent and entered Ottoman service first under his uncle, an ‘*Ayan* (notable) of the town working as a collector of taxes on tobacco. He volunteered for the 1801 Ottoman expedition to force French withdrawal from Egypt. The French were forced to surrender to a joint British Ottoman force, and their evacuation left a power vacuum that Muhammad ‘Ali was able to fill (Al-Sayyad Marsot 1984, p. 61). He began by wooing the Muslim religious elite, those whom the French had tried and failed to use to control the country and who realized there was an alternative to the Mamalik (plural of Mamluk). Muhammad ‘Ali presented himself as the viable alternative candidate and found allies among both the religious elite and merchant class. By 1805, he had been able to be named governor by his local allies and by the sultan in Istanbul.

Between 1805 and 1811, ‘Ali had to struggle with the Mamalik, who regarded themselves to be the rightful rulers of Egypt. To rid himself and the country of them, he organized a meal for them in the citadel and then ordered their massacre by his own troops. According to legend, one Mamluk was able to escape by jumping his horse off the ramparts of the citadel and riding away. After the 1811 massacre, only local mopping up of pockets of Mamluk resistance was needed for ‘Ali to take control of the entire country. After a period of instability before ‘Ali’s arrival, the Egyptian people were thankful for the stability and prosperity he brought.

Muhammad ‘Ali embarked on an ambitious modernization program starting with the army. No longer wanting to maintain the Mamluk system, he decided on universal conscription of Egypt’s peasants. They had not served in the military for centuries and greatly resented being forced to join his army. He employed Europeans, mainly French officers after Napoleon’s defeat by allied European powers in 1814, and armed his men with modern weapons. This force was soon tested in the conflict between the Ottomans and the Sa‘udis in present-day Sa‘udi Arabia. Muhammad ‘Ali is given credit for reforming Egypt and the

start of the modern era; however, he was following the lead of Ottoman Sultan Salim III (ruled 1789–1807), who also attempted military reforms in the face of serious opposition.

In 1803, the Sa‘udis launched attacks out from their base in central Arabia into the surrounding areas, and the Sultan asked Muhammad ‘Ali to help. In 1811, his son Tusun led an expedition to Hijaz but was unsuccessful in invading central Arabia. In 1812, the Egyptians were successful in seizing Hijaz and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina from the Sa‘udis. By 1816, they were able to take the Sa‘udis’ capital, capture most of the al-Sa‘ud family, crush the Najd, and capture and execute their leader, ‘Abdallah ibn Sa‘ud. Muhammad ‘Ali’s peasant army had proven its worth in combat.

Inspired by the success of his forces in Arabia, Muhammad ‘Ali now wanted new territory and looked south to Sudan. In 1820, he launched his invasion of Sudan under the command of his son Ibrahim. By 1821, the Egyptian forces had encountered little resistance other than the Shayqah cavalry, which were only armed with chain mail and spears that were no match for the Egyptians’ modern guns. Once defeated, the Shayqah and the Ja‘aliyin Arabs remained loyal to Egypt until Sudanese independence. The conquest of the Nile seemed to be the destiny of Egypt, and ‘Ali ordered his forces south, but they were blocked by the vast Sudd swamp.

When Greece declared its independence from the sultan, Muhammad ‘Ali was again asked to send aid. However, the European powers would not stand by to allow the Greek rebellion to fail and sent their fleets to assist the Greeks. Muhammad ‘Ali not only lost his newly built fleet of modern warships but also saw his men stranded in Greece. He demanded the sultan give him Syria in compensation. When the Ottoman government did not respond, ‘Ali moved to take it for himself. His army moved swiftly, brushing aside Ottoman garrisons and pushing deep into Anatolia. In 1832, near Konya in central Anatolia, the two armies met, and the Egyptians won.

The Europeans did not want to see the Ottoman Empire defeated or a powerful new force rise in the Mediterranean. They forced ‘Ali to withdraw and leave Syria to the Ottomans. In 1840, the European powers offered him Egypt as his hereditary province in exchange for his withdrawal from Syria. The sultan agreed. This made him and each of his descendants the hereditary *Wali* (“vice royal”) of Egypt. In 1867, his grandson Isma‘il would win the title of *Khedive* (“Autonomous Lord”) in Turkish (*Khadawi* in Arabic).

Muhammad ‘Ali was also interested in improving the economy of the

country, and this meant improving agricultural output. He built canals that would allow for more modern irrigation systems and built a dam on the Nile. Called the *qanatir* (bridges), it was built where the Nile enters the delta and branches into separate streams. These qanatir were not as big as he wanted but were a major achievement for the engineering of the time. He also sent delegations of young men to France for education, mainly in technocratic positions or for the military starting in the late 1820s.

Muhammad 'Ali began Egypt's entry into the modern world as a strong centralized state. He established the structures of a modern state; although he did not give a constitution to the people, he set the country on its way into the modern world as an equal with the states of Europe.

**See also:** [Cairo](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#).

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## MUHAMMAD ANWAR AL-SADAT (1917–1981)

Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat was the third Egyptian president. He came to office in 1970 when his predecessor, Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir (or Gamal Abdel Nasser) died of a heart attack. He served as the leader of Egypt through the 1973 October War and the eventual Camp David talks that ended hostilities between Egypt and Israel. He was killed by soldiers in his own army at a celebration of the October War.

Sadat was born into a poor family in a village in the Upper Egyptian province of Minufiyah. His father was Nubian and his mother Sudanese. He was one of 13 children. He was fortunate enough to make it to and graduate from the military academy in 1938 and was posted in Sudan with Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir and became one of the founding members of the young Free Officers Movement.

During World War II, he was imprisoned by the British for his activities with the Egyptian General 'Aziz al-Masri after Sadat tried to persuade the general to rise against the British in 1941 (Cooper 1989, p. 105). The level and extent of Sadat's involvement is now confused because of different stories he told in two books—*Revolt on the Nile* and *In Search for an Identity*, his autobiography. Although his anti-British feelings were shared by most Egyptians of the time, he served a term in jail based on his supposed support for the Axis powers. Sadat was one of the young officers who was a devout Muslim, and he kept the group in touch with the Muslim Brotherhood and other secret organizations.



**The president of Egypt from 1970 until his assassination in 1981, Anwar Sadat is best known for his part in drawing up the 1979 Camp David Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel. (Jimmy Carter Library)**

During the 1952 coup, Sadat was assigned to announce the coup on Egyptian radio. He had a deep voice that was perfect for the announcement. Sadat held several offices under al-Nasir, including vice president (twice), president of the National Council, and founder and editor of the newspaper *al-Gumhuriyyah*. He was appointed vice president for a second time in 1969, and this led him to the presidency when al-Nasir died in 1970.

Following al-Nasir's death, Sadat embarked on what he called a "corrective movement" in which he purged the most ardent Nasirists from the government and expelled the Soviets. He reformed the army and began preparing it for war with Israel. He also had to deal with the economic ruin brought on by ties with

the Soviets and the aftermath of the 1967 war. He reversed land reforms, and by 1973 most of the country's land was back in the hands of prerevolution families. This is well portrayed in the novel *War in the Land of Egypt* by Yusuf al-Qa'id and in the film version of it, *al-Muwatin Masri* or *The Citizen Masri* ("Masri" means Egyptian). The book was banned by the Sadat and Mubarak governments on and off but was made into a popular film in 1991 starring Omar Sharif as the corrupt landowning mayor.

The October War greatly boosted the morale of the Egyptian and Syrian peoples. The myth of Israeli invincibility was smashed, and in the early weeks of the war Egyptian troops crossed the Suez Canal and punched through the supposedly impregnable Bar Lev Line. Eventually, an Israeli counterattack brought the war to an end, but the idea of Israeli's overwhelming military superiority was broken forever. Seen as a victory by Egyptians, the war allowed Americans to take the lead in negotiations and for U.S. investment to flow into Egypt and begin the economic boom of the *infatih* (economic opening). Sadat tried to open relations with several countries, including the Vatican, and he invited many important leaders to Egypt. Among the nations he reached out to was Iran, which helped pay for much of the cleanup of the Suez Canal after the 1973 war. He also visited several heads of state in their countries and remains the first and only Egyptian president to visit Israel and address the Israeli parliament in 1977. He visited Iran and addressed that nation's parliament in Persian in 1971. In 1978, he and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, negotiated the Camp David Peace Accords with the help of U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Both al-Sadat and Begin won the Nobel Peace Prize the same year. The Arab world reacted to this separate peace treaty by suspending Egypt from the Arab League and moving the organization's headquarters from Cairo to Tunis in Tunisia.

Sadat's economic policies allowed free enterprise to flourish, and he tried to remove the subsidies on basic food stuffs such as bread, which had resulted in bread riots in 1977. An attempted coup in 1981 resulted in the mass arrests of some 1,500 people; even Sadat called it a *purge*. As his reputation on the outside grew larger, his image in Egypt itself continued to ebb as increasing numbers of Egyptians felt humiliated by the treaty with Israel and oppressed by his police. At the annual military parade celebrating the October War in 1981, he was assassinated by four gunmen from the Egyptian Islamic Jihad group who were led by Lieutenant Khalid Islambuli. The group had been given orders in Asyut, Upper Egypt, which rose in a local rebellion and was held by Islamic Jihad for a

few days. Islambuli and the others were arrested, tried, and executed. Sadat was survived by his wife, Jihan, and by his vice president, Muhammad Husni Mubarak, who ruled Egypt until he was forced from office in 2011.

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [King Faruq](#).

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## MUHAMMAD HUSNI MUBARAK (1928–)

Muhammad Husni al-Sayyid Mubarak was the fourth president of Egypt and the longest serving—from 1981 to 2011. Only Muhammad ‘Ali ruled the country longer in the modern era (1805–1848). Like al-Sadat, Mubarak was born in Minufiyah Province in Upper Egypt and had a typical background and local high school education. After graduation, he applied for the military academy and graduated in 1949. He was too young to be part of the Free Officers Movement or the war with Israel in 1948. In 1950, he joined the air force academy and became a pilot instructor.

Between 1959 and 1961, Mubarak was in the Soviet Union, where he became close friends with a Syrian air force pilot, Hafez al-Assad. On his return to Egypt, he was made commander of two air force bases, the first near Cairo and the second in Bani Suef. He made it through the 1967 war unscathed and was made commander of the Egyptian air force academy. He prepared pilots for possible war by expanding the number of pilots. In 1972, he was named head of the Egyptian air force.

In the 1973 October War, his air force was able to hit 90 percent of all its targets in the first days of the war and the presence of Egyptian jets in the sky above boosted the morale of ground troops. Although Mubarak’s role was limited during actual fighting and missiles played a more important role than jet aircraft, he nonetheless emerged as a hero from the war.

In 1975, Sadat made Mubarak his vice president and sent him on numerous missions abroad, where he made important friends among Arab leaders such as King Hassan II of Morocco and the future King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. He would be able to use these friendships later in his life. He did not oppose peace with Israel but did not endorse it himself. He never visited Israel but did not make an issue of Egypt’s peace with Israel because he did not want to endanger aid to Egypt aid from the United States.

With Sadat’s assassination in 1981, Mubarak became president. He began by looking at economic improvements in the country and then increased the amount of affordable housing and the availability of education and medical treatment for

Egyptians. He took a hard line initially with both corruption and laziness on the job. He dismissed ministers who were seen to be corrupt and fined members of parliament for not showing up to work. During his presidency, Egypt again was readmitted to the Arab League, and Cairo was again made the organization's headquarters. Because of al-Sadat's assassination and an ongoing war with radical Islamic groups such as al-Gama'a al-Islamiyyah, he expanded the state security apparatus. Islamic radicals made several attempts on his life. During a 1995 visit to Ethiopia for a conference of the Organization of African Unity, an attempt to kill him exposed not only the Egyptian radicals but also the complacency of the Sudanese government. Mubarak responded by having the Egyptian air force bomb Sudanese air bases and arresting more than 20,000 men and women in Egypt.

Mubarak backed the American-led coalition against Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1990–91 and was paid around a half-million U.S. dollars per soldier by the Kuwaiti government. Mubarak opposed the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, stating the actual problem was the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, which needed to be settled first. Nonetheless, he wanted the Americans to stay in Iraq once the Iraqi government was replaced to stop the instability that he was afraid would and did occur when the United States withdrew troops.

In 2005, Mubarak stood again for reelection, but this time the list of candidates included more than just his name. The election was full of problems. Ayman Nur, candidate for the Ghad (Tomorrow) Party, was convicted of forgery and sentenced to hard labor in prison for five years. Other problems included stuffed ballot boxes. Mubarak was nonetheless reelected. Allegations of corruption soon began to appear, including a 2005 damning report by U.S.-based watchdog organization Freedom House that stated that corruption had expanded under Mubarak. Egypt ranked 98th (with zero being the least corrupt) out of 178 countries. His two sons, Gamal and 'Alaa, were seen to be the most corrupt members of his family and government. When it looked like his son Gamal would succeed him as president of the country, opposition throughout the country became more open and more widespread.

In 2011, with elections looming and Mubarak's declaration that he would not stand again, protests demanding his immediate removal from the government continued to grow. Egyptians gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square to demand it. The protests were part of the general Arab Spring that removed leaders in three Arab states: Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. After the Egyptian army stepped in on the side of the protestors, Mubarak gave up and resigned, handing over the reins

of government to General ‘Umar Sulayman.

Mubarak’s health deteriorated, and he had a heart attack after he was arrested. He and his sons were tried twice by the courts and convicted of embezzlement. Mubarak himself was cleared of corruption charges, but his sons were not. The sons remain in prison, but Mubarak remains in a military hospital in Cairo because of his poor health, even though he has been officially freed by an Egyptian court. In 2014, he slipped in the bathroom and broke a leg and hip that needed surgical repair.



Streets leading into Tahrir Square were decorated with murals of the revolution. The current government is slowly covering them over, but some could still be found in early 2016. (John A. Shoup)

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat](#).

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## MURCHISON FALLS

Murchison Falls or Kabalega Falls is on the Victoria Nile River (the southernmost part of the White Nile) where it enters Lake Albert or Luta Nziga. Explorer John Hanning Speke and his companion James Grant were told of the lake, but they did not stop to explore how the Luta Nziga might be connected with the Nile. They had bitter experiences with local leaders who tried to relieve them of all of their trade goods, and they had been warned that the king of Bunyoro was the worst. Bunyoro and Buganda, where they had been treated well by King Mutesa, were at war or nearly so, and coming as they did from Buganda they reasoned would only cause them great annoyance and further delay. When they reached Gondokoro in South Sudan, they were met by both of the Bakers, Samuel and Florence, and John Petherick, who had been sent to greet them and provide them with needed supplies to make the onward journey. They informed the Bakers they had not seen the Luta Nziga, and the Bakers decided this was a chance for them to add their names to those who had proved the sources of the Nile.

In 1864, the Bakers became the first Europeans to see the great falls where the Nile is propelled through a gorge less than 30 feet (10 meters) wide and plunges 141 feet (43 meters) into the lake. The average waterfall has a volume of 11,000 cubic feet (300 cubic meters) per second, which creates massive waves in the lake and a deafening sound as it plunges downward. The Bakers named the falls “Murchison” for Sir Roderick Murchison, then president of the Royal Geographic Society.





Murchinson Falls, or Kabalega Falls, forces its way through a narrow channel only 23 feet, or 7 meters wide. (Sam [D'cruz/Dreamstime.com](#))

The falls are a spectacular site and have been used for several movies supposedly set in other places in Africa, in particular *The African Queen* (1951) and *King Solomon's Mines* (1950). The location makes for a dramatic setting. In 1926, a national park was established that includes the Bugungu (the largest mahogany forest in Africa) and Karuma wildlife preserves. During Idi Amin's time, the name of falls was changed to the Kabalega (or Kabarega) Falls for the king of Bunyoro. Kabarega was the last independent king of Bunyoro and was removed by the British in 1899. Idi Amin's attempt to rename the falls after a Ugandan hero of resistance to the British did not stick, and the name has returned to Murchison.

**See also:** [Baker, Samuel, and Baker, Florence](#); [Bunyoro](#); [Grant, James Augustus](#); [Lake Albert](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

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## MUSEUM OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES: THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

The Cairo Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, also called the *Egyptian Museum* or *Cairo Museum*, holds one of the most important collections of ancient Egyptian artifacts in the world. The collection houses materials dating back to the predynastic period through late antiquity. Along with the Coptic and Islamic museums, it houses one of the single most important sets of treasures in the world, covering more than 7,000 years of human achievement ("The Egyptian Museum" n.d.). The collection of ancient Egyptian objects began in the late 18th century with the start of Egyptology or the study of ancient Egypt. Initially, finds were shipped to Europe for private collections to decorate wealthy European homes or to serve as the start of scientific collections in what are now major museums in the world.

The first museum for ancient Egyptian objects in Egypt was begun by Muhammad 'Ali in 1835, and he appointed the scholar Rifa'at al-Tahtawy as supervisor for the new museum (Radwan 2009, p. 21). The first museum was built in the 'Azbakiyyah Gardens, but by 1850 the building was full and the objects were transferred to a larger building in the Citadel. In 1855, Archduke Maximilian of Austria visited Egypt and asked Khedive 'Abbas for the artifacts as a gift, and the khedive agreed. This first collection now serves as the basis for the Egyptology section of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

The second collection began with French scholar Auguste Mariette, who arrived in Egypt in 1850. He excavated at Saqqarah and discovered the Serapeum. In 1858, he was made the new director of antiquities. He urged the government to build a new museum, and one was begun at the former steamer docks in Bulaq during the rule of Khedive Sa'id and finally opened in 1863 by Khedive Isma'il. The building was exposed to dangers such as fires, so in 1889 the collection was moved to Isma'il's Giza Palace, where it stayed until 1890.

Mariette died in 1881 and did not see his hopes for a new museum completed. Under the orders of Khedive 'Abbas II Hilmi, the present museum was started in 1897 and finished in 1902. French architect Marcel Dourgnon designed a neoclassical building to house the collection. It is now organized into the main divisions of ancient Egyptian history, with the main foyer under the glass dome housing predynastic and early dynastic pieces. Visitors then proceed to the galleries on the right that move through stone sarcophagi and then into the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms and then the Persian, Ptolemaic, and Roman periods. Galleries upstairs hold the Tutankhamun exhibit as well as many smaller objects, including items made from glass beads.

The building's T shape originally allowed for expansion, easy flow of visitors from one gallery to another, and the use of natural light. High spacious galleries also allow air circulation. With two levels, the museum initially had teaching rooms and laboratories for hands-on learning and restoration work. An open garden at the front of the building contains a small pool with papyrus as well as many statues, a small temple, and decorative tops from pyramids and obelisks. In honor of the "founder" of the museum, the Egyptian government authorized a bronze mausoleum for Auguste Mariette designed by sculptor Denys Puech to be erected in the garden. Around the mausoleum are busts of other scholars who have contributed to Egyptology up to the present day.

Today the museum is overstuffed with objects, and traffic noise and pollution have rendered the original natural lighting and air circulation unworkable. A new museum is planned to house the more than 150,000 artifacts near the pyramids in Giza (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 88). Since the 1970s, many local museums also have been opened to stop the arrival of new artifacts to the Cairo Museum and to house them closer to their places of origin. Among the most important of these is the Luxor Museum, which opened in 1976 (Seidel and Schulz 2005, p. 324). The Luxor Museum was built with assistance from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



**The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, also known as The Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Egypt, is one of the best known museums in the world. (Alex [Zarubin/Dreamstime.com](#))**

The museum was broken into during the 2011 revolution, and several mummies were destroyed, 50 objects were stolen. So far, only 25 have been recovered (Radwan 2009, p. 28). Starting in 2013, the recovered items have been specially marked to note which objects had been taken and when the object was recovered. In 2015, the museum was going through a much needed security renovation after the 2011 revolution and threats to the collection by Islamic fundamentalists, followers of Da'ish or the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (Syria).

**See also:** [Cairo](#); [Egyptology](#).

*John A. Shoup*

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## MUSEVENI, YOWERI (1944–PRESENT)

Yoweri Kaguta Museveni is the current president of Uganda, a country that lies west and north of Lake Victoria and east of the Rwenzori Mountains, both sources of the Nile River. Museveni came to power in 1986 after leading resistance movements against two presidents, Idi Amin and Milton Obote. When Museveni took office, Uganda was in desperate condition. The economy had collapsed, and the population had been victimized by violence. Although Museveni’s presidency has had its shortcomings, the country is now more stable than at any time since the country’s independence from Britain in 1962.

Museveni was born in 1944 in the cattle-herding region of Ankole in southwest Uganda. He received a bachelor’s degree in political science and economics from the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, where he came into contact with student radicals. He returned to Tanzania in 1971 after Idi Amin toppled Uganda’s first president, Milton Obote, in a military coup. Museveni formed a resistance movement, the Front for National Salvation, which joined the Tanzanian invasion of Uganda to oust Idi Amin in 1979. When Obote again seized power through a fraudulent election in 1980, Museveni began a five-year guerilla war against the Obote regime. The National Resistance Army (NRA) and National Resistance Movement that he founded drew support from Uganda’s southern and western regions, whereas government support came largely from the north. Ruthless government attacks against civilians increased public NRA support, and by January 1986 the NRA was powerful enough to take over Kampala, the capital city, and Museveni was declared president. After taking office, Museveni undertook government, economic, and social reforms that brought international praise.

Resistance to the Museveni government sprang up immediately, mostly in the north. Museveni’s offensives against rebel groups were condemned by human rights organizations for their harsh treatment of civilians. Within a few years, most groups had laid down their arms and accepted amnesty. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) was the lone exception. Traditional religion formed a

large part of the movement's ideology, and leader Joseph Kony claimed to speak with spirits who guided his actions. The group became notorious for its cruelty against civilians and the abduction of young children who were forced to become child soldiers and commit unspeakable atrocities. Government operations eventually pushed the LRA out of Uganda, but the group survives and continues to operate in surrounding countries.

Under Museveni, Uganda has come a long way. The country is largely stable and secure, the economy is growing, tourism has returned, and there is the potential of oil revenues in the near future. The World Bank indicates that the nation is meeting its goals of reducing poverty and promoting gender equality. A strong campaign in the 1990s against HIV and AIDS dramatically reduced occurrence of the disease, although in recent years it has been on the rise. An antihomosexual law that criminalized homosexuality was signed by Museveni in 2014, but was repealed several months later after a loud international outcry. The international community has also been critical of Museveni's support of rebel groups in neighboring countries. Museveni has been elected to the presidency five times, the latest in 2016. Although many Ugandans feel it is time for him to go, Museveni shows no sign of stepping down.

**See also:** [Idi Amin Dada](#)

*Geri Shaw*



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## MUTESA I (R. 1856–1884)

Mutesa I was a 19th-century African king who ruled the Kingdom of Buganda on the northwestern shores of Lake Victoria in what is today Uganda. Buganda was the most powerful and sophisticated kingdom in the region, and as *kabaka* (king), Mutesa had absolute authority. During his reign, Buganda was transformed from an isolated, unknown Central African kingdom to a region sought after by Egyptian and European powers who wanted to control the source of the Nile River. He was responsible for bringing in British influence into the kingdom through Christian missionaries, which ultimately led to the establishment of the British Uganda Protectorate.

Around 1856, Mutesa inherited a highly sophisticated kingdom from his father. The Baganda (Ganda people) lived in clean, organized villages of spacious, circular reed huts. They made a soft cloth from tree bark and cultivated bananas from which they made beer. Men wore long togas and sandals while women were generally naked. A broad roadway cut through the jungle and led to the royal settlement near present-day Kampala. The *kabaka* lived in the royal compound at the center of his capital attended by a council of advisers, court musicians, a royal harem, pages, and slaves. Strict protocol was observed at court. Clothes were required, and no one could speak or sit without permission. The *kabaka* held court seated on a red blanket. Near him was his spear, a shield, and a white dog, which were symbols of royalty. On procession, people would fall on their faces as he passed, and if he chose to sit a page would be behind him on hands and knees to act as a stool. Although the court was highly cultured, it was characterized by cruelty and brutality. Mutesa had burned alive all his royal



siblings when he came to the throne. Murder, torture, mutilations, and executions were everyday events, even for the smallest offenses such as speaking too loudly. Human suffering held no interest.

Mutesa was a young monarch in his 20s when John Hanning Speke arrived in 1861. Speke described Mutesa as tall, thin, and intelligent with large eyes. He wore a white toga tied at the shoulder, and his hair was styled into a cockscomb. He walked in a stiff stylized manner meant to copy the walk of a lion. Speke presented Mutesa with gifts, including firearms and ammunition. Reportedly, Mutesa took one of the rifles, loaded it, and asked one of the pages to go into the courtyard and shoot someone. The page did as ordered, pleasing the king very much. No importance was given to the person who had just been killed. Mutesa kept Speke, later joined by James Grant, in his settlement for several months before allowing them to continue their journey.

Buganda's archrival was the Kingdom of Bunyoro to the west, and wars with the kingdom were ongoing. Bugandan armies also plundered other nearby kingdoms. Mutesa maintained a fleet of huge war canoes on Lake Victoria that he used to loot islands and control trade on the lake.

Arab traders from the east coast were arriving in increased numbers, so by the time Henry Morton Stanley arrived in Buganda in 1875 Mutesa had already adopted Arab dress and briefly converted to Islam. Mutesa, however, was growing concerned over Arab influence, especially Egyptian expansion up the Nile River. Egypt's intent was to annex Buganda and gain control of the entire Nile River. To counter the Arab influence and befriend Europe as an ally against Egypt, Mutesa professed interest in Christianity and asked Stanley to send Christian missionaries.

Protestant missionaries from Britain arrived in 1877 followed by Catholic missionaries from France. The two faiths began arguing with each other almost at once. Mutesa treated the missionaries cordially and enjoyed bringing Catholics, Protestants, and Arabs to his court for heated debates. Rather than conversion, Mutesa was more interested in the technology and learning that the missionaries brought with them. As the Egyptian threat decreased, Mutesa's attitude toward the missionaries changed. He ceased to support them and brought traditional witch doctors back to his court. He also returned to the violence that had characterized his earlier reign; this time, many of the victims were Christian converts. The dismayed missionaries could only wait and hope that Mutesa's successor would be better. However, when Mutesa died in 1884, he was succeeded by Mwanga, who turned out to be worse. In time, British soldiers

arrived to both aid the missionaries and claim Buganda for the British Empire. Ten years after Mutesa died, Buganda was part of the British Uganda Protectorate.

**See also:** [Buganda](#); [Bunyoro](#); [Lake Victoria](#); [Stanley, Henry Morton](#); [Speke, John Hanning](#).

*Geri Shaw*

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# N

## **NAJIB MAHFUZ (1911–2006)**

Najib (also spelled *Nagib* and *Naguib*) Mahfuz (also *Mahfudh* and *Mahfouz*) is a leading writer in Egypt and the entire Arab world. So far, he has been the only Arab novelist to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, which was awarded to him in 1988. Mahfuz was a master at creating characters that closely reflected the realities of modern Egypt, and even though many of his novels are set during the British occupation the characters are still studied as portraits of contemporary Egyptians (mainly Cairenes, or Cairo residents).

Mahfuz was born in the historic Gamaliyyah (Jamaliyyah) District in Islamic (Fatamid or medieval) Cairo, and his father had been a civil servant. To give his children a better education, his father moved the family first to the ‘Abbasiyyah District in 1924 and later to another modern suburb. Mahfuz would vividly describe these three districts in his novels. Although he had six brothers and sisters, he was the youngest; the closest to him in age was 10 years older, so he felt as if he were an only child. In many ways, his own life seems to be mirrored in Kamal, the hero of his Cairo Trilogy. In the first book, *Bayn al-Qasrayn* (usually titled *Palace Walk* in English) (1956), Kamal lives in Gamaliyyah and is the much younger son of the highly traditional father, al-Sayyid Ahmad ‘Abd al-Jawad. His brothers are more than 10 years older, and his two sisters are also older; none have much in common or spend time with the much younger Kamal. Mahfuz had a fairly traditional education, and his family was devoutly Muslim. Nonetheless, his mother took him to museums, something that helped him form his strong Egyptian nationalist feelings—as did the events of the 1919 revolt against the British. The revolt has a major place in the first book of the trilogy, and Mahfuz was eight when it happened. He had clear images of the revolt in his mind, and *Palace Walk* gives a clear picture of the Egyptian understanding of what happened.

Mahfuz attended King Fu’ad University (now Cairo University) and after

graduating in 1934 obtained a job in the civil service like his father. He would continue working as a civil servant until he retired in 1971. An avid reader in his youth, he began writing in 1930 and had several articles published in journals and newspapers while he was a student. In 1932, he published his first novel, *Misr al-Qadimah* [*Old (Ancient) Egypt*], which was set in ancient Egypt like most of his early novels. He wanted to produce a series of novels that would cover the breadth of Egyptian history, and he was inspired by British novelist Sir Walter Scott. However, these early novels had only mild success, and he changed in 1945 to delve into the conditions of Egypt's ordinary people as they struggled with social, economic, and political change. He wrote his most translated book in 1947, *Zuqaq al-Midaq* (*Midaq Alley*), a caricature of the "types" of people living in the old part of Cairo. It remains his most successful book; in 1963, it was made into a film starring Shadia, one of Egypt's female stars of song and film. A Mexican film based on the novel starring Salma Hayek was released in 1995 and went on to win numerous Spanish film awards. The novel *Midaq Alley* followed closely on his book *Khan al-Khalili* (1945). The real Midaq Alley is located close to the Khan al-Khalili in Old Cairo.



The Gamaliyyah quarter of the old city was where the famous writer Najib Mahfuz was born and lived for the early years of his life. It served as the setting for several of his novels including *Midaq Alley*, or *Zuqāq al-Midaq*, and the first of the Cairo trilogy, *Palace Walk*, or *Bayn al-Qasrayn*. (John A. Shoup)

These books hit a nerve with Egyptian readers as well as with Arabs throughout the Arab world. Mahfuz seems to have captured the true nature of

ordinary Cairenes. His stories pull no punches and fully present the working class in Egypt. In 1950, he published another masterful portrait of a poor family's struggle to climb the social and economic ladder called *Bidayah wa Nihayah* (*The Beginning and the End*). It was another success and was made into a film in 1960 that starred several of Egyptian cinema's leading lights—Farid Shawqi, Aminah Rizq, and a young Omar Sharif.

*Palace Walk* begins the trilogy by following the life of a traditional family in Cairo. The Arabic title means “between two palaces” and describes a well-known area on Mu‘izz lil-Din Allah Street that runs from Bab al-Futuh in the north to Bab al-Zuwayalah on the south. In 1964, film director Hassan al-Imam made the novel into a film starring Yahya Shahin as the family patriarch, Si Sayyid (meaning lord and master). Although the film was criticized, Shahin's portrayal of the stern but hypocritical patriarch is masterful. Al-Imam followed on the first novel with films based on the second, *Qasr al-Shawq* (*Palace of Desire*) (1957), which was released in 1967. The third, *al-Sukkariyyah* (*Sugar Street*) (also 1957), was released as a film in 1973. The Cairo Trilogy chronicles the changes in Egyptian and Cairene society from World War I through World War II. Mahfuz won the Noble Prize in Literature in 1988 for this series in particular.

Mahfuz became disillusioned with the Egyptian government, and his novels took on a far more critical point of view. In 1959, he published *Awald Haritna* (*The Children of Gabalawi*), which was banned in many Arab countries because the main character, Gabalawi (“He of the Mountain”) was God and his children the Prophets Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Mahfuz denied that Gabalawi is God but is the idea men have of God. Still, in 1989, radical cleric ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Rahman condemned the author and his book, and one of al-Rahman's followers stabbed the elderly Mahfuz in the neck on his way to his favorite coffee place in ‘Aguzah in 1994.

Three other Mahfuz novels must be mentioned because of their strong criticism of the Egyptian regime and its effect on society: *al-Luss wa-al-Kilab* (*The Thief and the Dogs*) published in 1961 and made into a film in 1962; *Thartharah fawq al-Nil* (*Adrift on the Nile* or sometimes called *Chitchat or Babbling on the Nile*) published in 1966 and made into a film in 1971; and *Miramar* with the same name in English published in 1967 and made into a film in 1968. Of these novels, *Thartharah fawq al-Nil* is the darkest; the main character and his friends are consumed by drug addiction.

In all, Najib Mahfuz wrote 34 novels, 350 short stories, and dozens of film

scripts. He decided he would not work on the scripts made from his novels but collaborated on several, allowing plots changes for the films. He believed in freedom of expression and remained a friend of the Islamist Sayyid al-Qutb but defended author Salman Rushdie following a *fatwah* (religious order) issued by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. Mahfuz died at 94 in 2006, the same year the Egyptian government finally allowed *Awlad Haritna* to be published. He was survived by his wife and two daughters.

**See also:** [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [King Faruq](#); [Saad Zaghlul](#).

*John A. Shoup*



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## NILE DELTA

The delta of the Nile River was named such by the ancient Greeks who noticed it forms a near perfect Greek letter *D* ( $\Delta$  or *delta*). It is from the Nile that all other rivers take the name *delta* when they broaden and merge with another body of water, usually a lake or sea. The Nile's delta covers a large area, and the peak of it is at *al-Qanatar* ("the Barrages"), the site chosen by Muhammad 'Ali to build a dam on the river and increase the water available to irrigate crops in the delta and reclaim land from the desert. Al-Qanatar is located some nine miles (15 kilometers) north of modern Cairo.



**Villages along the Nile were often built above flood levels before the Aswan High Dam was completed. This one has a now abandoned *shadduf*, or bucket, on a lever to raise water to irrigate fields once the flood was over. (John A. Shoup)**

The Nile today splits into two main channels: the Rosetta (Rashid) and Damietta (Dumiyat) branches. It stretches 150 miles (240 kilometers) along the Mediterranean coast from Alexandria in the west to Port Sa‘id in the east. From north to south, it stretches 99 miles (160 kilometers). It has incredibly rich soils, and the topsoil can be as deep as 70 feet (21 meters). The rich topsoils were laid down over the millennia but ended in 1970 when the High Dam at Aswan was completed and annual floods ended.

The Nile delta is a lush agricultural region and highly productive. Listening to his French advisers, Muhammad ‘Ali (ruled 1805–1849) invested in cotton for European textile mills and first wanted to expand production in the delta. He

ordered a dam built where the Nile begins to spread into the delta, but the job proved much bigger than the engineers of the day could handle. Not until much later and the invention of reinforced cement was a British company able to build a dam that did not leak. By that time, Britain was deeply involved in Egyptian cotton production. Nonetheless, Muhammad ‘Ali ordered the construction of new canals that brought water to places that did not have it before and set Egypt’s course on modernization paid for by cotton production. Land was reclaimed from the desert, and greater agricultural production began during the last years of his rule.

The delta in the ancient past had seven distributaries: (1) the Canopic or Herakleotic, (2) the Bolbitine (the Rosetta of today), (3) the Sebennytic, (4) the Phanitic or Phatmetic (today’s Damietta), (5) the Mendesian, (6) the Tanitic, and (7) the Pelusiac. Most of the other branches have silted up and been lost, with little remaining of their courses through the land other than at Wadi Tumilat, which had been an inland lake. The Pelusiac entered the Mediterranean at the city of Pelusium in north Sinai, and part of its path was used in building the Suez Canal. It is believed that the biblical Goshen was an area along the Pelusiac branch. Much of the information about the numerous distributaries comes from Roman geographer Pliny the Elder (died 79 CE). The delta has always been heavily populated with numerous villages, towns, and cities because the rich agriculture can support large populations. Today, the delta is divided into several major Egyptian provinces just as it was in ancient times. Alexandria is the largest in the delta, with a population of more than 4.5 million people, but the delta also contains the cities of al-Mahallah al-Kubra, Tanta, al-Mansurah, Zagazig, and Port Sa‘id. The entire delta region has a population density of 1,000 per square kilometer and a total of some 40 million people. The delta has always supported greater populations than Upper Egypt, with the notable exception of the modern city of Cairo.

Since 1970’s completion of the Aswan High Dam, environmental conditions in the delta have changed. Without the silt that used to be deposited every year, the seashore is eroding—in some places, as much as 100 yards (91 meters) a year. With the rise in sea levels caused by global warming, the delta is turning into a salty marsh as seawater penetrates the groundwater and makes large areas in the northern sectors unusable for agriculture. Without emergency measures, cities such as Alexandria and Rashid will be flooded, and more than 77 square miles (200 square kilometers) of land will be underwater by 2025.

**See also:** [Alexandria](#); [Damietta](#); [Disuq](#); [Mahmudiyyah Canal](#); [Mansurah](#);

Rashid; Tanta.

*John A. Shoup*

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## NUBA

The Nuba people live in the Nuba Mountains in Sudan’s South Kordofan Province west of the White Nile River. They should not be confused with the Nubians of the Nile River valley near Egypt. The Nuba are an African people who have lived for centuries in relative isolation in their mountain villages. The Nuba number approximately 1.5 million people (Jok 2007, p. 104) and belong to more than 50 different tribes, each speaking its own language. The term *Nuba* was introduced in the 20th century by Arabs and Europeans but was not adopted by the people of the mountains until recent wars united them. The Nuba suffered heavy casualties during the Sudanese civil war, and unrest continues.

The Nuba’s origins are obscure. Many tribes say that they have always lived in the mountains. Some claim that their original ancestors sprang from special rocks in their tribal areas (Seligman and Seligman 1965, p. 393) What appears certain is that over many centuries different groups arrived in the Nuba Mountains from different locations. The mountains offered good resources and protection from slave raids and the Arab armies that advanced into North Africa beginning in the seventh century.

Traditionally, the Nuba are farmers and herders who live in permanent villages within their tribal areas. Although each tribe has its own distinct language, Nuba culture is similar from one group to another. A traditional Nuba village consists of a cluster of round huts made of mud or stone with pointed, cone-shaped, thatched roofs. Near their huts Nuba tend vegetable gardens and small animals. Crops are grown in valleys or terraced hillsides farther away from villages. The main crops are millet, sorghum (from which a traditional beer is made), corn, and peanuts. Nuba also tend cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs.

The rainmaker holds the most important position in the tribe and is the religious leader of the community. The rainmaker performs ceremonies to bring rain and communes with great ancestral spirits. Among the most important

festivals are those associated with planting and harvesting crops. The Nuba are spiritually tied to their tribe and the land. Islam and Christianity have many adherents, but some Nuba still follow their traditional religion.

Physical strength is prized by the Nuba and is developed in young men through wrestling. Competitions between villages accompany major festivals. In previous eras, Nuba men wrestled nude and covered in white wood ash, but T-shirts and shorts are now preferred. Nuba are also known for their elaborate body art. Intricate body painting is used to enhance a man's muscular physique. Scarification in women is associated with milestones in life. Because of outside influences and disruptions in life caused by civil wars, many Nuba traditions are being lost.

During the 19th century, the Nuba came under attack by slave traders who preyed on African populations. Slaves were needed for the Egyptian army and for agricultural labor along the Nile River. The Nuba were especially targeted. Slave raiding was intense during Turco–Egyptian rule and the Mahdist Islamic state in the late 19th century. The tribes fared better under British rule during the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium, but the region was ignored in favor of developing the Arab north.

Lack of development and marginalization continued after Sudan gained its independence in 1956. The government in Khartoum began a policy of Arabization and Islamization that threatened tribal customs and traditions. With their culture in jeopardy, the Nuba rebelled, which brought harsh reprisals by the Sudanese army. During the civil war of 1983 to 2002 between Sudan's Arab north and African south, the Nuba supported the south. In retaliation, the Sudanese government bombed civilian targets, including schools, churches, hospitals, farms, and homes. Government-supported Arab militias also attacked and burned villages in an effort to drive out the Nuba and take over their land. Drought, starvation, and fighting claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Many Nuba were relocated to so-called peace villages where they were had to accept Islam if they wanted to receive aid. Their land was given to Arab settlers. The policies toward the Nuba amounted to genocide. Tribes banded together in reaction to the common threat and the destruction of their culture. They began identifying themselves not just by their tribe but also as "Nuba." A peace agreement in 2002 lessened hostilities, but renewed fighting erupted in 2011 when the government in Khartoum refused to allow the Nuba the self-rule that had been part of peace negotiations. The Nuba culture and way of life are increasingly threatened by continuing violence.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Nuba Mountains](#).

*Geri Shaw*



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## NUBA MOUNTAINS

The Nuba Mountains are a group of hills in the center of Sudan west of the White Nile River some 300 miles south of Khartoum. It is an important region of the middle Nile valley. The hills are home to a variety of tribes known collectively as Nuba. This African people migrated over time to the mountains from many directions, taking advantage of the natural resources and the protection the mountains offered. The region straddles the divide between the African cultures to the south and Arab cultures to the north, with the Nuba Mountains at the center of some of the worst conflicts. As a result, the Nuba have suffered greatly. The Nuba Mountains continue to be an area on the brink of hostility.

In Sudan's Southern Kordofan Province south of the city of al-'Ubayyid (El Obeid), the Nuba Mountains rise abruptly out of the extensive Sudanese plains. The range consists of a broken series of craggy mesas stretching for 90 miles. The area is more than 20,000 square miles (51,799 square kilometers), roughly the size of Scotland. The hills reach a height of 3,000 feet (914 meters), with the highest peaks more than 4,700 feet (1,432 meters). Compared to the surrounding plains, the mountains appear lush and green with occasional forests. The mountain valleys and plains are well watered with approximately 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) of rain annually between May and October. Though the region is subject to drought, the rainfall is normally sufficient to allow seasonal agriculture and grazing. For centuries, the inhabitants of the mountains were able to cultivate enough food for themselves, even producing a surplus for trade. Modern wars, however, have greatly undermined their self-sufficiency.

The majority of people living in the Nuba Mountains are known as the *Nuba*,

a name given to them by outsiders in the 20th century. They should not be confused with the Nubians who live in the Nile River valley near the Egyptian border. The Nuba consist of some 50 unrelated African tribes and subgroups, each with its own language or dialect, who traditionally live in their own sections of the mountains. Some tribes have lived in the mountains for thousands of years, and others are relative newcomers driven to the mountains over centuries to escape persecution and war. The Nuba are sedentary agriculturists of mixed religious faiths. Some are Christian, some Muslim, and others cling to ancient traditional religions. Approximately 1.5 million Nuba live in the mountains, mostly in small villages. Their main administrative centers include the region's capital of Kadugli and also Talodi, Dilling, and Rashad.

Southern Kordofan is also home to Baggarah Arabs. These nomadic cattle herders are descendants of North African Bedouin whose ancestors originally came from Arabia. During the 18th century, the Baggarah began moving eastward from Chad into southwestern Sudan in search of new grazing lands. By the early 19th century, they had reached the southwestern region of the Nuba Mountains, pushing the Nuba farther into the hills. As an Arabic and Muslim people, the Baggarah are allied with northern Sudan's Arab rulers. This has meant conflict with the Nuba over resources, culture, and politics.

The Nuba Mountains enjoyed relative peace and isolation until the 19th century when outside pressures began to take a toll on life in the mountains. In 1821, Egypt conquered Sudan and set up Turkish–Egyptian rule. The Egyptians had an insatiable appetite for ivory and slaves, both of which are abundant in Sudan. Slaves were needed to bolster the Egyptian army, transport ivory, work on farms along the Nile River, and to be a traded commodity with Arabia. Non-Arab, non-Muslim communities were subject to slave raids, including the Nuba Mountains. The Baggarah were instrumental in procuring slaves and used them to pay tribute to the Egyptian government. The mountains were heavily raided during this time. British officials employed by Egypt tried to curtail the slave trade, only to be faced with revolution by the followers of Muhammed Ahmad, the Mahdi. The Mahdi began his rebellion from southern Kordofan around the Nuba Mountains. His key supporters were the Baggarah, who served as the backbone of the Mahdi army. The Mahdi revolution set up an Islamic state between 1885 and 1899. Slave raids grew ever fiercer during this time, and again the Nuba of the mountains were a target.

The early part of the 20th century brought peace for the mountain region under the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium, although the area was neglected and

undeveloped. At independence in 1956, the region was one of the poorest in Sudan. The Sudanese government began a policy of Arabization and Islamization, including the establishment of *shari'a* (religious law). Arabic became the national language and Islam the national religion. The mountains were marginalized in favor of the Arab regions of Sudan, and their residents were forced to live under Arabization and were limited in government participation. When the second civil war between the north and south began in 1983, the Nuba supported the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, the southern rebels, which was active in the Nuba Mountains. Between 1983 and 2002, the mountains became a battleground in the rebellion. The government armed Baggarah militias, promising them any land the Nuba abandoned. This led to the wholesale destruction of Nuba villages and farms. Added to these ground attacks, the government pursued aerial bombing of civilian targets such as churches, schools, hospitals, homes, and crops. A devastating drought at the same time created a humanitarian crisis in the mountains. International aid, however, was kept out by the Sudanese government. Hunger was used as a weapon of war. Many Nuba were displaced or forcibly relocated, and hundreds of thousands were killed. In 1993, the government of Sudan was accused of ethnic cleansing for its treatment of the Nuba. After South Sudan became independent in 2011, the Nuba Mountains remained in the north. As part of peace negotiations with the Sudanese government, the Nuba Mountains had been promised self-rule, but the government reneged. The mountains again erupted in rebellion. Conflict in the Nuba Mountains continues.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Muhammed Ahmad, the Mahdi](#); [Nuba](#).

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## NUBAR PASHA (1825–1899)

Nubar Nubarian was born in Izmir in Anatolia in 1825. His father was a relative of Boghos Bey Yusufian, an important Armenian minister for Muhammad 'Ali. Nubar took the name *Boghos* in honor of his relative who took an early interest in Nubar's education and development. The young Nubar was sent to France for education. Nubar returned to Egypt and worked first as a secretary to Boghos Bey. Because of his good work, Nubar was promoted to second secretary of Muhammad 'Ali and then selected to be adviser to Ibrahim Pasha on a mission to Europe.

When Ibrahim died in 1848, 'Abbas, the next in line to the succession, kept Nubar as his adviser. Nubar was sent to London in 1850 to present Egypt's case and to try to stop the Ottoman sultan's attempts to back out of the agreement that gave the family of Muhammad 'Ali hereditary rights to Egypt. Nubar was highly successful and was given the title of *Bey* as a reward. 'Abbas then sent him to Vienna in 1853, where Nubar remained until 'Abbas died in 1854.

'Abbas was succeeded by Sa'id, who dismissed Nubar but brought him back to work as his chief secretary two years later. Sa'id dismissed Nubar again but then reappointed him first to a mission to Vienna and then as his chief secretary until Sa'id died in 1863.

Sa'id was succeeded by the more capable Isma'il, who saw in Nubar a man he could trust. Isma'il appointed Nubar head of his mission to Constantinople to convince the sultan to change the succession in Egypt in Isma'il's favor (the designated heir, Ahmad, had died in a train accident), seek permission to begin the Suez Canal, and secure the title of *khedive* for Isma'il. Nubar's mission was a success, and he was rewarded with the title of *Pasha* by Isma'il. In 1866, Nubar was made foreign minister and oversaw the official declaration of Isma'il as khedive and the recognition of his eldest son as his heir.

At the height of his career, Nubar embarked on a program to reform the old system of capitulations, which had grown to a cumbersome 17 European powers with their own courts and laws. He got the powers to agree to an international mixed court system whereby local consuls of the powers had the authority to send cases to their home countries. Nubar did not restrain the spending by Isma‘il that brought the country to bankruptcy and was seen to be too close to the French and British consuls. Eventually, when Nubar tried to impose a constitutional monarchy, Isma‘il dismissed him.

In the subsequent turmoil in the country, Isma‘il was forced to abdicate. His son Tawfiq became khedive in 1879. The Egyptian army rose in revolt in 1881, which directly interfered with Britain; the British responded by occupying the country in 1882. Nubar was out office at this time, but he returned following the revolt's collapse. However, Nubar and the British Lord Cromer could not cooperate, so Nubar was dismissed from office in 1888. Nubar was returned to office in 1894, where he remained until he retired from service in 1895 to spend the remainder of his life between Cairo and Paris. He died in 1899.

**See also:** [Barring, Sir Evelyn \(Lord Cromer\)](#); [Khedive Isma‘il](#); [Khedive Tawfiq](#); [Muhammad ‘Ali](#).

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## **NUBIANS**

The Nubians are an ancient people who inhabited the region between Aswan in Egypt and Wadi Halfa to the southwest in Sudan. Nubia is hemmed in by the Nile River on one side and sandstone cliffs on the other and is 310 miles in length (500 kilometers) and from three to 27 miles (five to 45 kilometers) wide, the same as the area of Lake Nasser formed by the Aswan High Dam (El Hakim 1999, p. 5). Nubians traditionally lived by the Nile, and for them it has always been an important part of their culture.

Nubians live in both Egypt and Sudan and are also divided by dialect. The Nubian language belongs to the Eastern Sudanic family of the Nilo-Saharan

phylum (Newman 1995, p. 47). Nubians developed their own alphabet based on Coptic, adding three letters that are found only in Nubian. After the Islamization of Nubians, Arabic was used to write their language, although Arabic does not contain all of their vowels (Arabic only has a, i, and u). Different dialects of Nubian developed, although they are generally mutually understandable: Kunuz or Kenuz, which is spoken in the north close to Aswan; and Mahas in the extreme south of Egypt and into Sudan and is more commonly referred to as *Nobiin* today, (Kennedy 1978, p. xxix; Mattoon 2011, p. 237). However, not all Nubians speak the Nubian language today. Many Arabized Nubians such as the Aliqat who live between the Kunuz and Mahas areas only speak Arabic. In Nubian, the term *rotan* refers to the Nubian-speaking people of the Nile River (Kennedy 1978, p. xxix). Farther south in Sudan are the Kunuz of Dongola or the Kenuzi-Dongalawi. In the region of Dongola are the Ja‘aliyyin Arabs, who are Arabized Nubians who not only have taken on an Arab identity but also speak Arabic. Kennedy notes that all Nubian men speak Arabic, whereas only older women (in the 1970s when he did his research) speak mostly Nubian. Even by the time of Kennedy’s research, the young of both genders spoke fluent Arabic because of schools and mass media.



**The markets in Aswan sell local products such as these distinctive baskets made by Nubian women. The sale of such baskets, usually to tourists, is an important source of family income. (John A. Shoup)**

Nubians emerged as a separate language group around 5000 BCE and developed a distinct culture by 4000 BCE based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Often in conflict with the pharaohs of Egypt, Nubia was frequently dominated for its resources. However, the 26th Dynasty of Egypt was itself Nubian and ruled both Nubia and Egypt from 760 to 656 BCE. Nubia retreated back to the area between the First and Second Cataracts, and a more or less stable border emerged that was set in a 652 treaty called the *baqt* between the Arab Muslim conquerors of Egypt and the Nubians (Mattoon 2011, p. 229). The treaty lasted for 700 years before it collapsed due to the spread of Arabic-speaking nomads into Nubia. By the 14th century, most of Christian Nubia was overrun by Muslim Arab nomads; by the 18th century, Arabic had greatly



replaced Nubian in everyday speech.

Nubian culture is heavily agricultural with small farms along the Nile. Access to water and irrigation technologies gave Nubians their major source of income. Nonetheless, by the 19th century, Nubian labor was important in places such as Cairo, where laborers were sought to serve as building guards and servants because they were generally believed to be honest and clean. Remittances sent back to their families in Upper Egypt or Sudan served as major sources of income. Studies such as that conducted by Abdul Hamid el-Zein in 1961 focused attention on the waterwheel and agriculture because the Nubians were being forced to move to barren, rocky sites after their original villages were flooded by the first Aswan Dam. Zein tried to re-create the life of pre-1902 villages but failed to note that wealth was a result of more than agriculture (Eickelman 2002, p. 49). El-Kashif challenges the importance of the waterwheel, noting that for Nubians the number of palm trees a man owned determined wealth (El-Kashif 1999, p. 2011). El-Kashif's documentary also notes the bitterness of Nubians when they were moved away from the Nile.

In 1902, the first Aswan Dam was built and began the end of Nubia. The dam was raised twice in 1912 and 1933, and each time more land was flooded. By the end of the 1960s, more than 60 percent of Nubia was flooded, and both the Sudanese and Egyptian governments removed large numbers of people to Kom Ombo and Esna in Egypt and to Wadi Halfa in Sudan. Starting in the 1970s, Nubians began to move back to areas close to their flooded homes and to revive their culture and language. Nubians outside of the relocation sites established cultural clubs to promote Nubian music and literature.

**See also:** [Aswan](#); [Aswan Dam](#), [Low and High](#); [Cataracts of the Nile](#).

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## NUER

The Nuer are the second largest ethnic group in southern Sudan, numbering slightly more than 1 million people (Fadlalla 2009, p. 17). The Nuer speak a Nilotic language that is highly similar to that of the Dinka and belongs to the Eastern Sudanic family of the Nilo-Saharan phylum (Newman 1995, p. 4). In the 18th century, the Nuer migrated to their current homeland along the Bahr al-Ghazal and Sobat Rivers and close to where both enter the White Nile. When the Nuer entered this region, they pushed out the indigenous Dinka and began a mutual hostility between the two peoples. Nonetheless, according to British anthropologist Evans-Pritchard, who studied them in the 1930s, "Nuer and Dinka are too much alike physically and their languages and customs are too similar for any doubt to arise about their common origin ..." (Evans-Pritchard 1969, p. 3).

The Nuer are organized into lineages and tribes that act independently of each other. Evans-Pritchard's study of the Nuer could form the basis of a scientific attempt to understand tribal politics. Among the Nuer, a particular quasi-political or quasi-religious position arose—the leopard-skin chief. The leopard-skin chief has limited authority and is mainly a mediator in conflicts. Because the chief is connected to the powers of the earth or *mun*, he is considered a sacred person. Evans-Pritchard states that leopard-skin chiefs do not belong to "aristocratic" lineages but usually come from less important standing (1969, p. 174). He may not reside in his home community, but wherever he resides his mediation is sought to end conflict.

Some Nuer have converted to Christianity, but the majority adhere to their traditional religion. Fewer Nuer were induced into the mission schools, and they

have been less affected by Christianity as a result. Their traditional religion is based on the concept of a single god or creator whom they call *Kowth*. The Nuer worship him and offer cattle sacrifices, but he has few helpers and no organized priesthood.

Like most Nilotic peoples, the Nuer are agro-pastoralists. However, besides growing cereal crops such as sorghum, they place their highest social and economic value on their cattle. A Nuer boy is given an ox that he proudly leads around the camp. Cattle are named, and a boy may decide to take the name of his favorite ox as his own. Cattle provide all of the needs of the people, including food and fuel (in the form of dung). People even wash in cattle urine. The Nuer are so dependent on their cattle that they are called “the parasites of their cattle” (Evans-Pritchard 1969, p. 30). The Nuer also place weights on the horns of their cattle to shape them for easier recognition, and each color and pattern of the hide is also named. Boys decorate their cattle with colorful woolen tassels attached to their horns, make neck collars of wooden bells, or use the tips of cow’s toes to make a light tinkling sound when the animal moves or grazes. Nuer boys and men apply ash along the backs of their cattle every day to help ward off biting flies and pick off ticks along the bellies of their animals.

Like the Dinka, the Nuer year is split between the wet season when they live in a semipermanent settlement to plant and harvest cereals and the dry season when they move out into the grasslands to graze their cattle. Their economy also includes fishing, although they do not consider these foods to be as good as milk from their cattle.

Like the Dinka, the Nuer practice ritual scarification, which is part of their initiation ceremonies. Nuer men are easily recognizable by three to six long incisions in their foreheads, whereas the Dinka have seven to 10 smaller incisions on their foreheads. Women also receive scars, although generally they are raised dots on the face. The incisions are then rubbed with ash to cause a ridge or lump to form.

The Nuer are currently engaged in a major conflict with the Dinka that has once again plunged southern Sudan into civil war. Salva Kiir, the president of South Sudan, is a Dinka and has fired his vice president, Riek Machar, a Nuer, as part of a major corruption probe. The result is the current civil war.

**See also:** [Dinka](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Sudd](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## **PHARAONIC TEMPLES**

Ancient Egyptian temple architecture was conservative and changed little over the centuries from their first constructions in the predynastic period until their end in the third century CE. Temples from the older periods of Egyptian history were built in mud brick, but in the New Kingdom (1550–1070 BCE) most temples were built of stone. Temples were of two main types: those built as cult centers for the worship of a particular god and those built as mortuary temples for a particular pharaoh. Mortuary temples were associated with tombs and were generally located on the west bank of the Nile, which represented the setting sun and the powers of regeneration in Egyptian religion. Temples to the gods were frequently but not always built on the east bank of the river close to settlements. Some, however, were built on the west bank, a custom that went back to the Old Kingdom (2682–2145 BCE).

Temple architecture for a cult center consisted of several parts starting with the massive twin pylons that marked the gates. The pylons were tall trapezoids that leaned backward with each succeeding layer of stone, the legacy of building with mud brick. Between the two towers was an entrance that was blocked with a highly decorated doorway. A staircase on either side allowed access to rooms in the upper floors or to the roof of each pylon. Because the pylons were often as close as the average person would be allowed to approach a temple, they had deeply carved scenes of the pharaoh's life (usually the pharaoh "smiting" enemies of the state, whether or not the pharaoh in question ever fought a war). In the case of a cult center, the images might show the important acts of the god. The deep carving was done so the scenes could be seen from a distance. In some instances, the carvings were covered in gold sheeting that would catch the sun's rays at any time of day and make the scenes easily and equally visible from a distance. The pylons had several tall flagpoles attached to them for colored cloth flags. In front of the pylons, many temples had obelisks that represented the

Benben mound, the first earth to emerge from the chaos of water in the beginning. To enhance the symbol of the first earth to emerge, the tops of many obelisks were sheathed in gold to gleam splendidly both at sunrise and sunset. They were frequently dedicated to the god Amun-Ra. Obelisks were also placed inside temples but usually at the gates of individual parts.

After the great pylons, a courtyard called a *peristyle court* frequently held smaller chapels built by subsequent rulers. When bark processions became popular and statues of the gods or goddesses were carried in boats around the shrine, many of the outer courtyards included bark and boat shrines to store the boats when not in use. This *Opet* festival lasted nearly a month (27 days). The most important day of this festival was when the statue of Amun-Ra was taken from his shrine in the Temple of Karnak to the Temple of Luxor 1.5 miles (2.5 kilometers) to the south (Seidel and Schultz 2005, p. 590). The statue of the god remained in the Temple of Luxor for a few days before being taken back to Karnak. This festival lives on today in an Islamic version; the bark is used to carry the blessings of the Sufi Shaykh Abu Hajjaj around the Temple of Luxor before being taken back to his mosque inside the Luxor temple grounds.



The *pronaos*, or anteroom, of the Temple of Kalabsha. The roof has collapsed, making it look light and airy. (John A. Shoup)

Behind the courtyard was the great hypostyle hall. In some temples, this was reached after a second set of grand pylons. As its name indicated, the hypostyle hall was a massive hall of columns. In Egyptian architecture, the columns were of specific shapes: palm trees, lotus flowers, papyrus bundles with closed or open tops, and tent poles. As styles changed during different time periods, the sides of the columns carved in either deep relief or raised relief depicted the

main events in a pharaoh's life or in hieroglyphic texts.

Behind the hypostyle hall was a second courtyard called the *pronaos* or anteroom. Depending on the importance of the temple, there might be another pylon entrance or obelisks to mark it. Behind this second courtyard was the shrine of the god or goddess called a *naos*. These shrines tended to be small, square buildings with flat roofs and contained little other than the statue of the god. Many temples had additional rooms for storage or libraries around the naos. In addition, many had rooms for study by scientists and other learned men placed near the naos. Most temples included a sacred water source—whether a small pond or a large lake—that represented the waters of chaos. Some also had nilometers to measure the rise and fall of the annual flood.

The temple complex of Amun at Karnak is a massive structure covering 247 acres (100 hectares) and was built and added onto for 2,000 years from the Middle Kingdom to the Roman era (Seidel and Schultz 2004, p. 330). It included not only the main temple for the god Amun but also numerous side chapels and temples to Montu, Ptah, Mut, and Khonsu. It has eight sets of pylons, a sacred lake, and several bark shrines. Various routes to the temple and the connecting route to the temple of Mut were lined with 1,300 ram-headed sphinxes (Seidel and Schultz 2004, p. 330). Nearly every pharaoh from Senusret I (1956–1911 BCE) of the 12th Dynasty to Ptolemy III (246–221 BCE) of the Ptolemaic dynasty improved or added to the structure. Other temples such as the Temple of Osiris at Abydos or the Temple of Hathor at Dendara are not as large; although they were built over a long period of time, they are more cohesive as a whole.

## **Nilometer**

The nilometer was a device used to measure the rise of the annual flood. Every civilization along the Nile River from Nubia north to the Mediterranean Sea used nilometers to predict the level of the flood. They were constructed in temples, and in the later period the Muslims built one on the southernmost tip of Roda Island in Cairo. A nilometer was built as a deep shaft that connected to the Nile by means of a canal or by groundwater. The shaft had a pole with many marks to measure the level or the marks were on the side of the shaft. Stairs allowed a person to descend to read the level. The nilometer would predict the level of the year's flood and be able to tell if it was going to be light, medium, or heavy. Light flooding would result in famine or worse, medium flooding would be just enough to meet the needs of agricultural production and prosperity, and heavy flooding would mean destruction.

In addition to temples for deities, the Egyptians also built mortuary or funerary temples as part of the burial rituals for kings, queens, and other important people. Mortuary temples had a different function. Although many were also built of stone and were massive, they were used in the transfer of the body from the place of embalming to the tomb. Those for the pharaoh also had massive pylons that marked the entrances to the segments of the temple. Two courtyards and at least one grand hypostyle hall with massive columns covered in relief carvings highlighted with bright paints were typical. The mortuary temples of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE) and Ramesses III (1183–1152 BCE) are well preserved having been built primarily of stone. The mortuary temple of Amenophis III (1388–1351 BCE) had two stone statues of the king, who stood at the entrance. The twin seated figures were named the Colossi of Memnon after an earthquake in 27 BCE caused a crack in one of the statues that “sang” at sunset, probably because of the change in air temperature. Egyptians believed the sad-sounding song was that of the goddess Eos, whose son Memnon died at Troy. Emperor Septimus Severus (193–211 CE) had the crack repaired, and the statue stopped singing.

Other mortuary temples still standing include that of the woman pharaoh Hatshepsut (1479–1458 BCE), who used the temple of Mentuhotep (2055–2004 BCE) as the basis for hers. Hatshepsut's temple is now called Dayr al-Bahri (“River Monastery”) and includes important scenes depicting the expedition she sent to the land of Punt, perhaps now modern Somalia. Fragrant plants brought from Punt are among the trees and bushes she had planted along the route to the



temple. The mortuary temples for both Mentohotep and Hatshepsut may each have been topped with a pyramid, but they are lost today. Others also may have had pyramid tops, but only the foundations remain today. Most mortuary temples included side chapels dedicated to Anubis or Amun-Ra in the New Kingdom; in the Old Kingdom, the chapels were more generally built for the god Ptah. The size of mortuary temples varies from large areas such as Dayr al-Bahri, the Ramesseum, and Madinat al-Habu, which match the size of large temples to the gods. Those from the Old and Middle Kingdoms such as at Giza and Saqqarah tend to be much smaller.



**Photo shows the false door of Idut in her tomb at Saqqarah. At the top, Idut enjoys offerings carved into the door. (John A. Shoup)**

Some of the mortuary temples complexes also included a hall for the Heb Sed

festival, such as that seen at Saqqarah. The Heb Sed was celebrated at the 30th year of a pharaoh's rule and then periodically every two to three years after to revive the pharaoh's power. One of the best-preserved Heb Sed halls is associated with the mortuary temple for Djoser (2665–2645 BCE) at Saqqarah. The joyous festival lasted for several days, with the person of the pharaoh engaged in publicly demonstrating his physical abilities. The festival was perhaps held in the mortuary temple to emphasize the regenerative powers of the setting sun.

Mortuary temples were also the setting for the extremely important Opening of the Mouth Ceremony that gave the dead the ability to speak at the important weighing of the heart. The ceremony involved activating several statues that represented the dead person. The key action was the opening of the mouth with a special tool that resembled a cross between a knife and a hoe. Mortuary temples had to have special places for these ceremonies to take place; to allow for offerings to be made, including offerings of food; and for offering tables to be set up so the living could provide for the dead.

**See also:** [Ancient Egyptian Religion](#); [Egyptian Gods](#); [Egyptology](#); [History of Egypt: Ancient](#).

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# R

## RASHID

Rashid or Rosetta has been inhabited since at least the time of Pharaoh Menes and was called *Khito* (*Trashit* in Coptic). The Greeks called it *Bolbitine* like the branch of the Nile that empties into the Mediterranean where the town is located. Today, that branch of the Nile River delta is called *Rashid*, again after the town that protected the entrance of the river. Although the town has an ancient history, it was not a major city; in the Ptolemaic period, Alexandria was the more important port. In the Christian period, the town's name returned to *Tarshit* and thus the Arabs called it *Rashid*. The town lies only 40 miles (65 kilometers) east of Alexandria and is thus in its shadow.

In the 850s (the Arab era), ibn Tulun moved the city closer to where it can protect the Nile with the approval of the 'Abbasid *khalifah* in Bagdad. He built a fort on the Nile, and the town grew up around it. The town was not significant, but the town was briefly occupied by the Europeans in 1249 during the Seventh Crusade led by French king Louis IX. The crusade was defeated by the Mamalik (plural of *Mamluk*), who took an interest in Rashid. The town then became important to trade in the Mediterranean. In 1517, Egypt fell to the Ottoman Turks and Rashid was further developed as a major trading port with Istanbul. On the orders of Mamluk Sultan Baybars (ruled 1260–1277), no oceangoing vessel could proceed up the Nile to Cairo; its loads had to be removed and transferred to river vessels. Baybars hoped this would help protect the country from European threats.

During the French occupation of Egypt, Rashid's defensive walls were reinforced. An officer at Fort Julien, the French name for Fort Rashid, found the Rosetta Stone. Both forts, Boghuz and Rashid, had been built by Mamluk Sultan Qaitbay (ruled 1468–1496) in the 1470s. In 1807, the opening of the Mahmudiyyah Canal brought about a resurgence in the importance of Alexandria, and Rashid began to decline. The city is famous for its Ottoman

period mansions, many of which are preserved today.

In the 19th century, the town became a favorite for British tourists who came to see its Ottoman waterfront houses. Today its population is approximately 59,000. Its people are engaged in fishing and agriculture, although agriculture has become less productive with the advance of the Mediterranean Sea because the Aswan Dam prevents valuable silt deposits from building up along the seafront. Water has become salty as well because seawater has penetrated into the shore front.

**See also:** [Alexandria](#); [History of Egypt: Islamic Period](#); [Mahmudiyyah Canal](#).

*John A. Shoup*

## Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone allowed scholars to understand hieroglyphics and read the ancient accounts from the Pharaonic period. The stone was discovered in 1799 by François-Xavier Bouchard, an engineering officer with Napoleon's invasion force. Bouchard discovered the stone while trying to improve Rashid's fortifications. The stone had been taken from its original place in the Islamic period and recut to fit in the walls of Rashid's fort. The stone has the same text in three parts: the upper section in hieroglyphics, the middle section in Demotic (a script form of hieroglyphics), and the third section in Greek. The Greek was readable and was noted the name of Ptolemy V Epiphanes in Greek text. His name in Greek was compared to the name in a cartouche in hieroglyphics. In doing so in 1822, French scholar Jean-François Champollion was able to show that hieroglyphics were both ideograms (pictures representing words) and phonograms (alphabetic sounds).

The Rosetta Stone has been the property of the British since the defeat of Napoleon's forces in 1801 and is now in the British Museum in London. Champollion had to work from copies of the stone. Competing with him to solve the riddle of hieroglyphics were Englishman Thomas Young and Swedish diplomat Johann Akerblad. None of those in the competition were willing to acknowledge the advances made by the others. Champollion's advantage was that he knew Coptic and was able to use it to help read the older script by recognizing that hieroglyphics had both ideograms and phonograms. He also journeyed to Egypt in 1828 and was able to read the names of pharaohs on monuments and prove that hieroglyphics did not change over the centuries of use.

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## RASTAFARIS (RASTAFARIANS OR RASTAS)

Rastafaris who live in Ethiopia belong to a religious group that has its roots in the Caribbean. It is not a mainstream religion in Ethiopia but is unique in its view of the country and the reverence it has for Haile Selassie I, the country's last emperor.

The group began in Jamaica in the 1930s, inspired by black nationalism and the "Back to Africa" movement promoted by Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey in the 1920s. Garvey prophesized that a king would be crowned in Africa who would become the savior of the African diaspora (descendants of the slave trade)

living under colonial domination and discrimination. In Africa, Ethiopia alone remained independent of colonial occupation and thus was a source of hope and pride to the African diaspora, a promised land to which Africans could return. The much publicized coronation of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1930 was seen as fulfillment of the prophecy and inspired a new faith that regarded Selassie as a messiah. The group took its name from Selassie's precoronation name of *Ras Tafari*.

Rastafaris believe they are one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Their symbol, the lion, comes from "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah," one of the emperor's titles. They also adopted the colors of the Ethiopian flag—red, green, and gold—which seen in many of the knit caps worn by Rastafaris. Practices of the faith include wearing dreadlocks (uncut hair) and the ceremonial and sacramental use of cannabis.

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 sent a shock wave through the African diaspora. Movements sprang up in many countries for Ethiopian relief, large demonstrations against Italy were held, with many people volunteering to fight for Ethiopia. After the Italians were defeated in 1941, Haile Selassie recognized the contribution of the African diaspora to Ethiopian independence. He set aside 500 acres (202 hectares) of his own property south of the capital Addis Ababa, known as the Shashamane-Malkoda Land Grant, for settlers from abroad who wished to immigrate to Ethiopia.

In the 1950s and 1960s, several Rastafari families migrated to Shashamane, which became popularized by the reggae music of Bob Marley, a Jamaican. The settlers brought their language, culture, and religion with them, giving the area a Jamaican atmosphere. They were regarded as foreigners, with strange customs and fanciful ideologies, especially their view of the divinity of Selassie, who was no longer popular among Ethiopians. Rastafaris were not allowed citizenship and had run-ins with the law over their use of cannabis, which is illegal in Ethiopia.

The overthrow of Selassie in 1974 and his death shortly after were blows to Rastafaris. Many believed he was still alive and would return to the throne. During the 17 years of Marxist military rule that followed Selassie's overthrow, Rastafari land was nationalized and life became difficult. Many Rastafaris left the country, but Shashamane survived.

In 2014, several hundred Rastafaris were living in Shashamane (Summers 2014) and had schools and other programs funded largely by foreign foundations. Ethiopia remains a promised land and a place of pilgrimage, but

there is little immigration.

**See also:** [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); Haile Selassie I.



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## RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

Most of the holidays and festivals celebrated in the countries along the Nile River are those of large universal religions such as Islam and Christianity. In Egypt, however, several contemporary festivals have their roots in the ancient Egyptian civilization. In South Sudan, many of the southern traditions still exist even among people who have become Muslim or Christian.

## Ancient Egyptian Calendar

The ancient Egyptian calendar was a solar calendar and influenced the one we use today in many ways. The calendar was divided into three seasons based on annual flooding of the Nile River. The first season of the year was called *akhet* (inundation), the second was *peret* (seed growth), and the third *shemu* (drought season or harvest time). Each season had four months of 30 days each, a total of 360 days. Five more days were added—the *epagomenes* (festival days), one each to celebrate the births of the gods Osiris, Isis, Horus, Seth, and Nephthys. The calendar was highly accurate and was only one-quarter of a day less than a full solar year.

The calendar began with the rise of the star Sirius or the Dog Star, called *Sepdet* by the ancient Egyptians, when it reappeared in the Egyptian sky in the middle of July. This more or less coincided with the start of the annual flood, which usually started in June. The Coptic Church still uses Egyptian names for the months: Tut (Thoth), Paopi, Hathor, Koiak, Tobi, Meshir, Parmhat, Parmouti, Pashons, Paoni, Epip, Messori, and Pi Kogi Enovat. Every four years, a variation in the calendar shifted the solar year by one year, so early on in the predynastic period, the year had to be shifted and days added to keep it in line with the rise of Sirius. Eventually, a 13th month was added to shift the year and keep it aligned with the reappearance of Sirius.

In Egypt, religious holidays have often been celebrated by both Muslims and Christians, an official state-sanctioned custom beginning in the Fatamid period (969–1170). Many holidays have remained cross-confessional ever since. The Fatamid *khulafa'* (caliphs) often had Christian and Jewish members of their courts or even in their families, and one of the main holidays was *Laylat al-Ghitas* (the Epiphany) to celebrate when John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the River Jordan. This is celebrated on the 11th of the Coptic month of Tubah or January 19. Although the holiday was celebrated by early Muslim communities, the Fatamids made it a national holiday. On that night, thousands of lamps were lit on the streets and along the banks of the river. Following the collapse of the Fatamid Dynasty, the holiday became more of a private celebration in homes where special Epiphany foods such as turnips are eaten.

Christmas is also cross-confessional in Egypt, and again the Fatamids encouraged the celebration by distributing special foods, mullet (fish), and fried doughnuts called *zalabyyah*. During the Mamluk period (1250–1517), streets were decorated with lamps that are similar to the *fawanis Ramadaniyyah* (*fanus* singular) or Ramadan lamps. Christmas is broadcast on Egyptian television, and the midnight mass held by the pope of the Coptic Church is attended by government officials and leading Muslim clerics. A special bread called *qurban* is made with a cross in the middle surrounded by 12 dots to represent Christ and

his 12 apostles. People also make the same shortbread or *kahk* Muslims make for the end of Ramadan.

Egyptian Easter follows the Julian calendar using the ancient Egyptian months. At the insistence of the Emperor Constantine in 325, the patriarch of Alexandria was given the duty of announcing the date. For Copts, the period before Easter is the Great Holy Fast and lasts for 55 days, including a full week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday with extreme fasting. A Coptic fast only allows vegetables to be eaten and only if cooked in water or oil; no animal products of any kind are allowed. On Easter Sunday, a major feast is prepared with roast lamb or turkey. Egypt also began the custom of celebrating with colored boiled eggs. Muslims also celebrated the holiday from the time of the Fatamids, Mamalik (plural of *Mamluk*), and the Ottomans. In 1528, Ottoman Sultan Sulayman (ruled 1520–1566) ordered 20,000 eggs to be distributed along with pastries and fruit (Abbas 1995, p. 37).



***Fawanis Ramadaniyyah*, or Ramadan lanterns, are sold in shops starting before and during the month of Ramadan. The custom of having Ramadan lamps goes back to the time of the Fatamid dynasty that ruled Egypt from 969–1171. (John A. Shoup)**

*Shim al-Nasim* (“Sniffing the Breeze”) is an ancient Egyptian holiday that celebrates the start of spring. It originally fell during the Great Holy Fast but has been moved to the Monday after Easter Sunday to allow Copts to celebrate. Colored Easter eggs are used in games, and people eat salted fish and green onions. In Suez, an effigy of British general Allenby is burned, a carryover from

the anti-British days before independence.

Other ancient holidays in modern form occurred around the annual Nile flood, but since the building of the Aswan High Dam they are no longer performed with the exception of *mulid* of Abu Hajjaj (Haggag) in Luxor. Yusuf Abu Hajjaj was a *sharif* or a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and his *mulid* (birthday) is a modern version of the ancient holiday when the sacred barque of Amun was taken by ship from Thebes to Karnak. There is still a procession of felucca on the Nile, and decorated coffins are carried on the shoulders of men or on camels around the outside of the mosque, which sits in the middle of the ancient temple in Luxor. There are a wide number of *mulids* in Egypt and Sudan for local Muslim, Christian, and Jewish saints—perhaps 5,000 to 6,000 in Egypt every year (Abbas 1995, p. 24). Among the most important is *al-Mulid al-Nabawi* or the *mulid* of the Prophet Muhammad. The Fatamids began the custom of celebrating the Prophet's birthday in imitation of Christmas, which began as a celebration of the birthday of Jesus. Egypt today celebrates three days with special sugar dolls, a bride with colorful paper clothes for girls, and a knight on horseback for boys. The main part of the celebration is the procession of Sufi orders from the Al-Husayn Mosque in Cairo.

Muslims celebrate two main holidays. *'Id al-Fitr* ends the month-long Ramadan fast, and *'Id al-Adha* ("The Feast of Sacrifice") ends the 10-day pilgrimage period in Mecca. In Egypt, Ramadan is a period of daytime fasting, and Egyptians have marked the month with special lamps or *fawanis* *Ramadaniyyah* since Fatamid times. Originally, the lamps marked the start of the next day's fast once they were extinguished; people were allowed to eat again when the *fawanis* were lit. Since Ottoman times (1517–1805), the end of fasting is marked in Cairo with a cannon in the citadel, called *Hajjah Fatimah*, that is fired at sundown each night. Ramadan is the month for new television series; ones made especially for the month and broadcast to time with *iftar*, the meal used to break the fast, when most people are home. In Egypt, starting with radio in the 1930s and now television, riddles or *fawazir* (*fazurah* singular) are broadcast and offer a wide range of prizes to those who can solve them. Ramadan has special foods such as *qamar al-din* ("moon of the religion"), which is apricot leather melted into water and drunk with *iftar*. Some people break their fast with *khushaf*, dates and nuts soaked in water. Before the day's fast, an early morning meal called *suhur* is eaten of *ful* (beans) or lentils, yogurt, cheese, and vegetables for the energy they will need. Three days of celebration follow both *'Id al-Adha* and *'Id al-Fitr*, and new movies are often released just like

### Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar is a lunar-based calendar; the months begin and end with phases of the moon. It has 12 months of 29 or 30 days each, depending on each new moon. The Islamic year is 354 days long and has no additional days or leap years. This means it is 11 days shorter than the solar calendar, and 11 days are moved into the solar calendar each year. The dates of holidays, which are fixed in the lunar month, occur 11 days earlier in the solar calendar every year. In 33 years, the calendar will have migrated around the entire solar year. In pre-Islamic Arabia, there was an attempt to fix the months to solar seasons, but it resulted in such an unwieldy mess that the Prophet Muhammad had a revelation that said the lunar months were not to be fixed to the solar cycle (*Surah 9–al-Tawbah*, verses 36–37).

The Islamic calendar begins with the *Hijrah* (migration) of the Muslim community to Mecca and Medina. The practice began in 622 CE. *Khalifah* ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab introduced the Islamic calendar in 638 by calculating the first day of the first month of year one of the Islamic calendar to correspond to the Hijrah. To know what the corresponding solar calendar year equates to in the Islamic calendar, many online tools have been developed. Or the dates can be mathematically calculated by subtracting 622 from the Gregorian calendar year and adding 32 to find the *Hijri* year.

Northern Sudan celebrates the same holidays as Egypt and, because of the close connection between the two, such holidays as Shim al-Nasim are also found in Sudan. Sudan does have its own special Sufi holiday called *huliya*, which commemorates the death of a Sufi master. Today the holiday allows different Sufi orders or *turuq* (*tariqah* singular) to perform *dhikr* or *hadrah*, and it also gives different leaders a chance to exchange pleasantries with each other. There is also recitation of the Koran by students from different Islamic schools.

In South Sudan, Christian holidays are usually celebrated according to Western church dates. Traditional celebrations were typically held at the end of harvest when there was enough food for feasts, including meat and fish. During this time, initiation ceremonies were and continue to be held, including scarification with slashes on the face, circumcision, and the removal of front teeth for both boys and girls (Deng 1984, pp. 65–67; Evans-Pritchard 1969, p. 251). Because circumcision is a religious requirement for Muslims, many peoples of South Sudan do not practice it on boys; it is often still practiced on girls, however. Deep slashes on the body and face and the removal of front teeth are part of the move from childhood into adulthood, and those who do not go through such initiations and join an age set are shamed.

**See also:** [Coptic Christianity](#); [Coptic Churches and Monasteries](#); [Islam on the Nile](#).

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## RUWENZORI MOUNTAINS (RWENZORI)

The Ruwenzori Mountains are the highest mountain chain in Africa and are located near the equator in Central Africa between Lake Edward and Lake Albert and along the border of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Ruwenzori are considered to be the legendary Mountains of the Moon and are the highest source of the Nile River.

In the second century CE, Ptolemy, a Greek geographer in Alexandria, drew a map of the Nile River based on stories he had heard from early travelers. His map traces the Nile from the Mediterranean to Central Africa, showing the river's source as two large lakes fed by a great mountain range that he titled "Mountains of the Moon." The map was surprisingly accurate. The Ruwenzori are a rugged, north-south mountain range 75 miles (120 kilometers) long and 40 miles (64 kilometers) wide. Towering snow-capped peaks reach nearly 17,000 feet (5,181 meters) high. The western side of the range drains into the Semliki River valley and Lake Albert. The eastern slopes feed Lake Victoria. Both lakes form the Upper Nile.

The Ruwenzori consists of six uplifted mountain blocks called *massifs*, each named after explorers in the region. The highest is Mount Stanley with Margherita Peak, 16,763 feet (5,109 meters), the tallest peak in the Ruwenzori and third highest in Africa. Henry Morton Stanley in 1889 was the first explorer to see the mountains. The range is wet and humid. Rain falls throughout the year and averages 78 inches (1,98 centimeters) and can go as high as 100 inches (254 centimeters) a year. Dense forest with rivers, waterfalls, and bogs covers the lower slopes and is home to chimpanzees, forest elephant, and hundreds of species of birds. At higher elevations are alpine lakes and moorland filled with colorful lichen. These higher levels are known for huge rare plants such as giant heathers, groundsels, and lobelias that can grow 20 feet (six meters) high. They have been described as "botanical big game" ("Rwenzori Mountains National Park" n.d.) The plants' special adaptations allow them to survive the extreme temperature changes between day and night. Snow falls at elevations above 14,750 feet (4,495 meters), and glaciers cover the tops of the peaks, although



many are melting because of climate change. The peaks are shrouded almost continuously in clouds. The peaks were first climbed in 1906 by Luigi Amedeo Guiseppe Maria Fedinando Francisco, the duke of Abruzzi, an Italian aristocrat and early pioneer of mountaineering.



**The Ruwenzori Mountains were the legendary “Mountains of the Moon” that were part of the search for the source of the Nile. (Nikolai [Link/Dreamstime.com](#))**

The Ruwenzori are the traditional homeland of the Bakonjo (Bakonzos) people of Uganda. Their life and culture adapted over generations to the rugged mountains. Under colonial rule in the 20th century, the Bakonjo were linked administratively to the Kingdom of Toro, with whom they were unrelated ethnically or culturally, and their survival as a separate tribe was threatened. After years of struggle, the Bakonjo were finally recognized in 2009 as the

Kingdom of Ruwenzururu. The Bakonjo cultivate the lower hills and have a thriving coffee industry. They have also benefited from the Ruwenzori National Park, a world heritage site that attracts hikers and wildlife enthusiasts from around the world.

**See also:** [Lake Albert](#); [Lake Victoria](#); [Stanley, Henry Morton](#).

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**SAAD ZAGHLUL (1859–1927)**

Saad Zaghlul (or Zaghaloul) was a leader of the Egyptian nationalist movement in the early part of the 20th century. He was born in 1859 or 1860 in a small village in the Nile River delta region to a middle-class peasant family. His education was in the village *kuttab* (primary school). He entered al-Azhar University in Cairo, graduating in the 1880s. During his time in Cairo, he became a strong nationalist and opposed British interference in Egyptian affairs. He was arrested and spent time in jail for his activities.

After his release from prison, he joined the civil service and rose through its ranks. He became independently wealthy (although of modest wealth) and was a friend of Princess Nazil Fazi. This ardent anti-British nationalist maintained a salon in which her invited guests could discuss politics. Because of his wealth and friendship with a princess, he was able to marry the daughter of Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Fahmi Pasha in 1895. Because of the influence of his new father-in-law, who was a close friend of British resident Sir Evelyn Barrington, he became a moderate nationalist and was not seeking the complete withdrawal of the British. He kept himself out of the extremist camp during World War I. His wife, Safiyah Hanim, was an active feminist and nationalist and campaigned for women's suffrage.

World War I saw Khedive 'Abbas II Hilmi deposed by the British because of his anti-British and pro-Ottoman sympathies. Egypt was declared independent of the Ottoman sultan and a sultanate itself. 'Abbas Hilmi's uncle, Husayn Kamil, was willing to become the new sultan, and 'Abbas went into exile in Istanbul. Sad Zaghlul, who had been appointed minister of justice in 1910, resigned in the wake of the row over 'Abbas Hilmi in 1912.

In 1919, an Egyptian delegation wanted to attend the peace conference in Paris to present the country's case for complete Egyptian independence. Angry over the way they were handled, the Egyptian people rose in a revolt that

included all classes, men and women, and Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The British could not ignore this truly nationalist uprising. From the uprising was born the first Egyptian political party, the Wafd, from the Arabic word for *delegation*. Saad Zaghlul emerged as the head of a strong nationalist party whose goal was British withdrawal from Egypt.

Attempting to stop the protests, the British exiled Saad Zaghlul as they had done with Colonel Ahmad 'Urabi in the past. They hoped that having the leader out of the way would end the protests, but they continued. He was deported to Malta and then later to the Seychelle Islands. Eventually, Egypt was declared an independent kingdom in 1922 after negotiations with Zaghlul and his party, and Zaghlul returned to Egypt in 1923.

In 1924, the Wafd Party won the elections, and Zaghlul was asked to form a government as prime minister. By the end of the year, however, he was forced to resign after the British commander of the Egyptian army was assassinated. In 1926, he became head of the Egyptian parliament, where he thought he could control the extremists. He died in 1927 and is buried in a mausoleum specially built for him in Cairo. The mausoleum's neopharaonic style was meant to emphasize his nationalism. He was survived by his wife, Safiyah Hanim, who continued to campaign for women's rights and the removal of the British from Egypt.

**See also:** [Barring, Sir Evelyn \(Lord Cromer\)](#); [King Faruq](#); [Nubar Pasha](#).

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## SENNAR

Sennar (or Sinnar) Town is located on the Blue Nile River. There are two towns that bear the name: Sennar Junction, which is the direct heir to the capital of the Funj people, and *Sinnar al-Madinah* (Sennar Town), which was built in the 1920s when the Sennar Dam was constructed. Sinnar al-Madinah was built on top of the older village of Mok-waar (“Socio-Economic and Opportunity Mapping Assessment Report” 2010).

Sennar Dam was part of the massive irrigation program called the Jazirah (or Gizera) Scheme by British colonial authorities to expand cotton cultivation in Sudan. Although the program helped settled farmers, it did little for pastoral nomads.

The main town, Sennar Junction, was named because several railroad lines meet there. Thus, the town continues as a major trade center as it did in the past. The total population of both towns is more than 100,000 people. Its population is both Arab and African. Because of the Gizera Scheme, conflicts between settling agriculturalists and pastoral nomads increased, especially when the Sudanese government opened up settlement to Sudanese farmers from outside the region. The agricultural development displaced pastoral nomads and their herds and exacerbated old conflicts over land and water rights. In 2010, the United Nations Development Program initiated a study of the region near Sennar and noted that problems with pastoral nomads had not yet been solved (Socio-economic and opportunity mapping Assessment report for Sinnar State Joint mission (“Socio-Economic and Opportunity” 2010).

Sennar Junction contains some ruins of the original Sennar, which was founded in the 16th century by Sultan Amara Dunqas. Most of the historic city is gone because it was made of mud brick (Insoll 2003, p. 119). The palace of the Funj sultan still stands with its tall and narrow five-story towers, but it has greatly deteriorated over time. Smaller versions of the sultan’s palace built by local elites still stand built of mud brick or uncut stone.

In 1977, Sennar University was founded and is a member of the Association of African Universities and the Federation of Universities in the Islamic World.

It is a private university, like many others in Sudan, and offers a wide range of majors at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

**See also:** [Blue Nile River](#); [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Muhammad ‘Ali](#).

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## SENNAR, THE FUNJ STATE

Sennar was the capital of the Funj Kingdom that emerged in late medieval period following the collapse of the Nubian states of Nobatia and Makuria. The origin of the Funj is not known, although they most likely had been nomadic herders of either Eastern Sudanic or Afro-Asiatic linguistic stock. Early in their history, the Funj took an Arab identity and adopted the Arabic language. Being Muslim and literate, their own self-identity of being Arab was supported by their genealogy, which claimed they descended from Umayyad refugees fleeing the persecution of the ‘Abbasids (Insoll 2003, p. 118). According to local legend, in 750 the Umayyad *Khalifah* (Caliph) Marwan II (744–750) fled down the Nile River from Egypt to seek refuge among the Arab Muslims of what is today Suakin on the Red Sea coast (Insoll 2003, p. 97). History, however, records that Marwan was killed at Busir in Egypt on August 5, 750 (Hitti 2002, p. 285).

The Funj established their capital city, Sennar, on the Blue Nile in the heart of the highly productive agricultural areas of the Gezira (Jazirah) and the Butana. Their first sultan was Amara Dunqas who defeated the Christian kingdom of Alwa just to the north. He expanded the area under his control to include the Third Cataract on the Nile River to the north, the foothills of Ethiopia, and the desert in Kordofan. Trade with Muslim neighbors in Egypt brought new wealth, and the Funj sultan established monopolies over such items as gold mined at Fazughli. The Funj sultan was considered semidivine and was rarely seen in public. When he did appear, it was with great pomp and ceremony.

The wealth of Sennar attracted merchants, and it was harder for the sultan to maintain his monopolies as the city grew. With the introduction of coinage and the growth of markets, the sultan lost control over trade. Nonetheless, the city grew in numbers and wealth. When British explorer Sir James Bruce visited in 1771 on his travels to follow the course of the Blue Nile River from its source,

he describes not only the economic wealth but also the military might of the sultan (Moorehead 2000, pp. 36–37). Bruce was greatly impressed with the Black Horse regiments mounted by warriors in chain mail using broadswords.

The military power of the Funj state was based on cavalry supplied by the area south of the Blue Nile River. Cavalry dominated the open spaces and had little real opposition given the lack of guns at the time. Bruce's visit was during a time when the Funj sultan had fallen under the control of his chief ministers, the Hamaj. This began the decline of the kingdom, and soon the Shilluk were able to take southern areas of the state. By the time of Muhammad 'Ali's conquest of Sudan, the Funj state was near collapse. By 1821, the famed Black Horse regiments were no more, and the last Funj sultan, Badi VII, surrendered his kingdom to Egypt. He remained a local governor for the Egyptians but soon faded from sight.

**See also:** [Blue Nile River](#); [Bruce, James](#); [Muhammad 'Ali](#); [Sennar](#); [Shilluk](#).

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## SHILLUK

The Shilluk or Chollo are a Nilotic people who speak a language belonging to the Luo group of the Eastern Sudanic family of the Nilo-Saharan phylum. The Luo group is not closely related to the other Nilotic languages in southern Sudan belonging to the northwestern Nilotic group. The Shilluk seem to have split from the Luo after they had established themselves near Lake Victoria (in modern-day Kenya) and returned north to their original homeland along the White Nile River north of the Sudd. They are the third largest ethnic group in South Sudan, being only slightly smaller in total numbers than the Nuer, with both numbering around 1 million people.

The Shilluk established themselves along the White Nile sometime in the 15th century. Unlike most other Nilotic peoples in Sudan, they formed a strong, central state around a divine or semidivine king called the *reth*. Their cultural hero, *Nyikang*, founded the state around 1490, and all subsequent reth were endowed with his spirit (Graeber 2011). The reth was not supposed to die of natural causes but to die in battle or in a duel. The person who killed him would then be declared his heir and the next person to embody the spirit of Nyikang. Nyikang is believed to be a god or a demigod whose spirit is immortal. The Shilluk became famous as a result of James Frazer's use of them as a model of divine kingship in his book *The Golden Bough* (Evans-Pritchard 1948).

The Shilluk state was built around the White Nile River town of Fashoda where the reth built his compound. Using the river to swiftly move his army, the Shilluk expanded far down the White Nile, raiding the Nuba Mountains and moving as far north as the Arab towns and villages around today's Khartoum. The Shilluk took advantage of the decline in the Sennar's powers to take the lands of the Funj Kingdom. During the Shilluk golden age (1650–1820), even the White Nile was called *Bahr al-Shilluk* in Arabic. They controlled trade along the river, and Fashoda (modern Kodok) was founded as the capital in the reign

of King Tugo. Fashoda is believed to be the place where the spirit of Nyikang meets their one god, Juok, and the spirits of all of the dead reth to mediate for the well-being of the kingdom.

The Shilluk raised cattle like other Nilotic peoples, but farming and fishing were more important economically. The Shilluk people lived in permanent settlements and did not migrate with their cattle as do the Dinka and Nuer. Their society is divided into 100 clans of four defined social classes: the *Kwareth*, or the lineage of the king; the *Ororo* royal lineage, which has lost the right to inherit; the *Chollo*, which encompasses nearly all of the Shilluk, including those who have arrived and married into the Shilluk and the people who lived in the region when Niykang arrived and established the state; and finally the *Bang Reth*, or those who are owned by the king, slaves, serfs, and those who descended from war captives or sought the protection of the reth and thus are at the bottom of the social scale (Stokes 2009, pp. 630–631).

The kingdom survived the first contacts with the Turkiyyah government following the conquest of northern Sudan by Muhammad ‘Ali of Egypt. However, with Egypt’s drive south to reach the headwaters of the Nile, the kingdom was incorporated into Egyptian-controlled territory in 1865. The British included the Shilluk in southern Sudan, and Christian missions were established. The people today still follow their traditional religion, with a small number of Muslims and Christians (Stokes 2009, pp. 631). The Egyptians, British, and Sudanese governments maintained the kings in the role of a magistrate; even today, a Shilluk kingdom exists, although it is integrated into the province of Upper Nile in the Republic of South Sudan (Stokes 2009, pp. 631).

The Shilluk were not heavily involved in the long Sudanese civil wars but were often victims of the violence. Since the independence of South Sudan, the Shilluk have suffered from actions by the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in the belief that both the Shilluk and Nuba were rebelling against the central government.

**See also:** [Dinka](#); [Fashoda \(Kodok\)](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Muhammad ‘Ali](#); [Nuer](#); [Sennar](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## **SPEKE, JOHN HANNING (1827–1864)**

John Hanning Speke is the “discoverer” of the source of the Nile River, which he suspected was the source when he first visited Lake Victoria in 1858. Speke was an officer in the Indian army but was allowed to leave to explore and hunt in Africa. His first expedition with Richard Burton into Somalia ended in disaster, with both men severely wounded and their European companions killed by the Somalis. Burton suffered a spear through his face, and Speke endured 11 separate wounds.

In 1856, Speke and Burton organized a second expedition funded by the Royal Geographical Society in London to march inland and try to find the source of the Nile. The first expedition “discovered” Lake Tanganyika in 1858, and Burton was convinced it was the source of the Nile. Unable to explore the lake thoroughly because both men were ill, they left it to one of their African captains, Sidi Mubarak Bombey, to bring word that the large river called the *Rusizi* flows into and not out of the lake. On their return, Speke and Burton stopped at the Arab town of Kazeh (modern Tabora), where they were told of another lake three weeks’ journey to the north and larger than Tanganyika. Burton allowed Speke to go with Sidi Bombey and several Baluch guards. They came to the southern shore of the lake near the modern town of Mwanza but were only able to use a thermometer to measure the lake’s height (the temperature at which water boils is affected by its height). Speke estimated the lake to be much higher than Tanganyika.

Speke’s discovery of the Nile source was greatly criticized by Burton, the senior member of the expedition, but illness prevented him from being able to check himself. In addition, the expedition had lost most of its equipment through breakage and theft, and they had no scientific instruments to determine the geographic facts. In anger, Burton ordered the caravan to proceed to the coast, where he spent time recovering his health before returning to London. Both men published their accounts of what happened, but the split between them was not repairable.

Despite Burton’s criticism, Speke was sent on a return expedition funded by the Royal Geographical Society. This time Speke was the senior member and

was accompanied by another young officer, James Augustus Grant. Their 1860 expedition headed not for Tanganyika but for Victoria. The two journeyed inland, and without a large party of armed guards they were forced to give local chiefs the equipment they had with them to pass through their lands. Arab slave raids had made the people suspicious of outsiders, and they had to buy the good opinion of the local leaders or face armed resistance. In 1862, they made their way to Lake Victoria on its western shore and proceeded along the coast north until they arrived in the Kingdom of Buganda. Speke found the Nile as it exits from the northern part of the lake and Ripon Falls just beyond where the river exits the lake.

Speke and Grant, both ill, were brought to the court of King Mutesa I (1838–1884), who treated the Europeans with kindness. The queen mother gave Speke two girls; Speke seems to have fallen in love with the oldest, Méri. According to his personal diary, when the girl left him for another man he was devastated (Jeal 2011, p. 159). Because she was an African, the affair was omitted from official published accounts of the expedition. Grant was also criticized for measuring how fat women of the court were by using a measuring tape around various parts of their bodies. These were not the behaviors of proper Victorian Englishmen.

Warned of the rapacious nature of King Kamrasi of Bunyoro, Speke and Grant did not follow the course of the Nile, which would mar the results of their expedition. Instead, they tried to avoid Bunyoro and did not rejoin the Nile until it had left Nzige Luta (“Little Luta”) far to the north. They traveled on the Nile and met Samuel and Florence Baker in Gondokoro. There they fell out with John Petherick, the person who had been sent to greet and resupply them. He was accused by Speke of stealing their goods, and Speke insisted on letting the Bakers resupply him and Grant for their journey down the Nile. At Khartoum, Speke sent a telegram stating the Nile “is settled” (Moorehead 2000, p. 61). However, others would have to prove the source of the Nile. Once again, Speke’s data were questionable and invited critics such as Burton.

Speke published his books *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* and *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, and Grant’s work, *A Walk Across Africa*, were also published by a private company for profit. This colored the credibility of their findings. The controversy caused Sir Roderick Murchison, the head of the Royal Geographic Society, to begin disliking Speke, which made it less likely a third expedition headed by Speke would be sent. A public debate between Burton and Speke was called in 1864. During the first

day's session before the debate started, Speke got up and left the hall. He went hunting with his cousin and a gamekeeper and seems to have accidentally shot himself while crossing a wall. He had placed the shotgun over the wall, barrel facing toward him, and it went off while he was himself going over the wall. It was thought then, and rumors of it continue to this day, that Speke had actually committed suicide.

Although Speke and Grant did not find the Lake Albert branch of the Nile, they were aware of it and told the Bakers about it and warned them about King Kamrasi. The Bakers were determined to find the Albert Nile and once and for all end the debate about the Nile's origin. Speke and Grant may have failed to prove they had discovered the source of the Nile, but others would prove they had.

Speke encountered the Tutsis (in what is now Rwanda) while traveling up the western shore of Lake Victoria. Charmed by the look of the Tutsis—tall, light skinned, and with a military bearing (that is, more European looking than other natives—he advanced what is called the *Hamitic theory*. This theory holds that the Tutsi are not Bantu (like the Hutu) but a people who may have come from Egypt centuries earlier. This theory was maintained by other Europeans and resulted in the hardening of sides that led to the genocide of Tutsis by Hutus in 1994 (“History of Hutu-Tutsi Relations” 2012).

**See also:** [Baker, Samuel, and Baker, Florence](#); [Buganda](#); [Bunyoro](#); [Burton, Sir Richard Francis](#); [Grant, James Augustus](#); [Mutesa I](#).

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## STANLEY, HENRY MORTON (1841–1904)

Henry Morton Stanley was born John Rowlands in Wales in 1841. He was the son of a poor family, and his unwed mother abandoned him as an infant. He was raised by his maternal grandfather until his grandfather's death. He then moved about from family to family of cousins before being sent to live in a workhouse for the poor. In 1859, he emigrated to New Orleans in the United States, where he was adopted by Henry Hope Stanley and took his surname. When the American Civil War broke out, he reluctantly joined the Confederate army. He was taken prisoner and sent to Camp Douglas, Illinois, where he joined the Union cause. He was quickly discharged because of severe illness. In 1864, however, he joined the U.S. Navy only to jump ship in 1865 to begin a career as a correspondent.

After a disastrous attempt at an expedition into the Ottoman Empire that ended in his arrest, Stanley attempted to locate British explorer and missionary Dr. David Livingstone, who had gone missing in Africa. Stanley's expedition was financed by *New York Herald* editor James Bennett (Jeal 2011, p. 262). In 1871, Stanley arrived in Zanzibar to equip his expedition and set off into the African interior with 200 porters on a 700-mile (1,100-kilometer) trek on foot. The expedition crossed what is today Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. He "found" Livingstone at the town of Ujiji on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, but Livingstone had no notion that he was "lost." Lake Tanganyika was one of the African lakes that had been proposed as the source of the Nile River. Livingstone and Stanley explored it and the surrounding areas and were able to prove that Tanganyika does not empty into Lake Victoria, which had been discovered by John Hanning Speke in 1858 (Moorehead 2000, p. 36).

Because of his success in "finding" Dr. Livingstone, Stanley was able to have a second voyage to Africa financed by both the *New York Herald* and London's



*Daily Telegraph*. This time he crossed Africa from east to west, the first European to do so. In 1874, he left Europe for Africa and was equipped with a boat that could be taken apart and carried in sections or put together to sail on any rivers and lakes he encountered. The main purpose was to follow the Congo River to the coast, which he did ending in 1877. After 990 days and a huge loss of men, he arrived at the Portuguese post of Boma on the Congo with only 114 survivors out of his original expedition of 356 people (Moorehead 2000, p. 142). He subsequently claimed the vast inland areas he had crossed for King Leopold of Belgium. Stanley's written account of this trek was published soon after his arrival back in England as *Through the Dark Continent*. Although it was a best seller, accusations of mistreatment of both his porters and the peoples he encountered on his way began to plague him.

In 1886, Stanley was hired to save Emin Pasha, born Isaak Eduard Schnitzer, a German who was governor of Equatorial Sudan for the khadawi of Egypt. After the Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi captured Khartoum and General Charles Gordon was killed by the Mahdi's men, concern in Europe grew for others in Sudan, so an expedition was organized to relieve Emin Pasha in 1886. The expedition took a year to organize, and the decision was to approach Equatorial Sudan from the Congo. By the time they passed through the Ituri Forest and the advance column emerged, only 169 of 389 members of the expedition were still alive. They eventually reached Lake Albert and were expecting to find Emin and his men. Emin was at the north end of the lake, but came to meet him when he heard of Stanley's arrival. It was a strange meeting with Emin supplying his rescuers with food. In 1889, some of Emin's officers had rebelled against him and switched sides to the Mahdi, but Emin did not want to abandon his post. Emin and a few hundred of his men finally left Equatorial Sudan and headed to the coast with Stanley. The expedition passed the Ruwenzori Mountains and Lakes Edward and George before touching the northern shore of Lake Victoria. Emin returned to service with the Germans in East Africa while Stanley returned to London via Cairo, where he wrote his account of the expedition titled *In Darkest Africa*.

Stanley returned to Europe in 1890 to much public acclaim, but the stories of the rear column's failures, accusations of the abuse of locals, and the devastating sleeping sickness plague that was blamed on the animals Stanley brought smeared his reputation. In the same year, 1890, he married Dorothy Tennant and was granted degrees and honors. He was elected to Parliament, where he served for a few years (1895–1900). He was knighted in 1899. Stanley's books on the

Congo may have served as inspiration for Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*.

**See also:** Bunyoro; Emin Pasha (Eduard Schnitzer); Lake Albert; Ruwenzori Mountains (Rwenzori).

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## SUDD, THE

The Sudd is the largest freshwater wetland in the world. Historically, it has formed a barrier between the Nile River that runs north to Egypt and the Nile that flows from Lake Victoria. The name *Sudd* comes from the Arabic word *sadd* for a dam or barrier, which is fitting because the Sudd was not penetrated by Western or European explorers until the 19th century. Because of the Sudd, expeditions of exploration to discover the source of the Nile had to be launched from the East African coast. From the north, the Nile had been explored by the ancient Egyptians and by Emperor Nero, but the Sudd prevented them from proceeding any farther south.

The Sudd is a mass of floating vegetation that absorbs as much as 50 percent of the waters that come from the south. It is fed by both the *Bahr al-Jabal* and the *Bahr al-Zaraf*. The *Bahr al-Ghazal* enters Lake No that is located just north of the Sudd and takes in the water from both the Bahr al-Jabal and the Bahr al-Ghazal forming the White Nile as it exits the lake.

The Sudd is 300 to 350 miles (483 to 563 kilometers) long and covers an area of 12,000 square miles (30,000 square kilometers). Seasonal floods raise the water level by 3.25 feet (1.5 meters), flooding nearly the entire region. The Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk who use the Sudd built their villages on areas of higher ground that are above the flood level. Once floodwaters recede, the land can be cultivated and used as grazing areas for herds of cattle.

The Sudd is an important nature preserve, having the most diverse bird and mammal populations in Africa outside the Serengeti Plains south and east of Lake Victoria. More than 400 species of birds and numerous animals live in the Sudd, including various types of antelope (with several endangered species), hippopotamus, and crocodile. It was known as one of the last remaining habitats for a species of wild dog, but the ongoing civil strife in Southern Sudan may

have caused its extinction. The Sudd's large amount of stagnant water is a breeding place for mosquitos and other disease-carrying insects, which makes it a dangerous place for humans to live. The Sudd has been declared a Ramsar Wetlands International Site of Interest, so named for a wetland in Iran and international conventions named in its honor. This will make any development more difficult unless it accounts for the natural systems that need protection.

The Sudd was first breached in 1841 by Salim Qapudan, a Turkish sea captain employed by Khedive Muhammad 'Ali of Egypt. It took Qapudan two attempts to finally break through the barrier of grass and reeds and bring Turko-Egyptian rule to the south. In 1870, the province of Equatoria was established as the southern boundary of Egyptian control in that country's attempt to bring the entirety of the Nile Rivers system under Egyptian rule. Plans were made for the excavation of a navigable canal that would make passage through the Sudd possible. The Jonglie Canal was to connect the Bahr al-Jabal River to the White Nile and thus bypass the Sudd. Work on the canal began in 1978, but the eruption of the second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005) brought work to a halt. The giant excavator, which was large enough to be seen from space, was hit and disabled by a rebel missile, and work stopped. The canal remains a plan, but it is doubtful whether the South Sudanese government is interested in the project because it would endanger the vast numbers of types of wildlife that depend on the Sudd. The Sudd has also been explored for oil and produces much of the oil exported by Sudan and South Sudan today.

**See also:** [Dinka](#); [History of Southern Sudan](#); [Nuer](#); [Shilluk](#); [White Nile River](#).

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## SUFISM AND SUFI BROTHERHOODS

Sufism is the mystic tradition of Islam and is considered a vital part of the religion, especially in Egypt. Recent reports indicate that upward of 15 million citizens self-identify as belonging to the Sufi tradition, which is a significant portion of the nation's 80 million Muslims. Sufism is a spiritual tradition that is highly experiential, but it has also produced a rich corpus of doctrinal and religious literature that appeals to the intellectual elite, with the result that many prominent orders (Arabic *turuq*) count senior religious scholars and government figures among their members. Egypt is home to many Sufi orders, which tend to attract mostly male adherents, and are organized largely in urban centers.

Mysticism has been an important element of Egyptian spirituality since ancient times. Egypt, for example, was home to the Hermetic spiritual tradition and the resting place of many of the world's Gnostic texts, which were otherwise lost across Europe and North Africa. Christian asceticism appeared when Christianity became Egypt's dominant religion along with the first monastic communes as Egypt developed into one of the great societies of the medieval period. Thus, when Islam entered Egypt, it was entering a region with a prior history of religious asceticism, which was undoubtedly of great interest to the Arab invaders. Exactly when Sufism became a mainstream Egyptian tradition is difficult to determine because the ascetic and esoteric practices were sometimes called by different names: *ihsan* (improvement), *ruhaniyyah* (spirituality), and *tasawuf* (Sufism).

### Sufism: An Overview

The great majority of contemporary mainstream Muslim scholars hold that the religion of Islam is derived from the Koran and the practices and traditions (Arabic *sunnah*) of the Prophet Muhammad, which were memorized, compiled,

and recorded by Muhammad's companions and students. This corpus of prophetic tradition is not esoteric in any way, although the Koran itself is admitted to have various layers of interpretation, the more complex of which can be understood and interpreted only by the most erudite scholars of the Koran. The spiritual practices of Islam are limited to those recorded in the Koran and sunnah, and there are no mysteries or revelations to be found outside of those two sources. Sufism, however, puts forward a distinctly different claim: the Prophet Muhammad did indeed teach the basics to all Muslims but then taught a more advanced set of practices and secrets to his closest companions and relations. These secrets were passed on from master (*shaykh*) to disciple (*murid*). Eventually—in the 12th and 13th centuries—certain societies (*turuq*; singular *tariqah*) formed around particularly charismatic and pious shaykhs. Although the earliest documented *turuq* was formed in Central or Western Asia, they quickly spread throughout the Muslim world. The greatest of the shaykhs were held by their students and devotees to be heirs of the prophets, and most contemporary Sufi orders consider their shaykh to possess miraculous power (Arabic *barakah*) which is an evidence of their closeness to the divine. Although some contemporary Muslim scholars are skeptical of Sufism's actual origins (as well as the more extravagant claims of some Sufi practitioners), Sufism today is accepted as a de facto legitimate movement within Islam by all branches of the religion except for the Salafis (or Jihadists) and related ultratraditionalists.

## Sufi Practices

Most Sufi orders hold that closeness to God is the end goal of all genuine spirituality. Indeed, they argue, the basic practices of Islam are necessary for any believer to have a positive relationship with God. However, Sufi masters suggest that through the rigorous and determined application of certain practices given by the Prophet Muhammad, it is possible to greatly increase one's experience of the divine and to feel a sense of closeness and even intimacy with God that cannot otherwise be experienced by non-Sufi Muslims. Where Islam suggests that a balance must be struck between this world (Arabic *dunya*) and the afterlife (Arabic *akhirah*), most forms of Sufism privilege the *akhirah* and promote self-denial and asceticism. The ego (Arabic *nafs*) is seen as the greatest barrier to closeness with God, so Sufi practices are designed to break down the ego and rebuild the person as a more spiritual being. Although each Sufi order has its own distinctive traditions, the most universal Sufi practices are (1) the repetitive chanting of the 99 names of God as an act of remembrance (Arabic *dhikr*), (2) continuous reading and memorization of the Koran, and (3) developing a strong relationship between the spiritual master (shaykh) and disciple (murid). These practices are obligatory for a murid who has taken the shaykh as teacher. They are to be carried out in parallel to the basic pillars of Islam: (1) confession of faith, (2) prayer, (3) charity, (4) fasting, and (5) pilgrimage to Mecca. Devotees who undertake the specific devotional practices of their order often report experiencing states of ecstasy (Arabic *hal*) while performing their chanting and meditations and even receiving visions and dreams of a religious nature. These experiences are considered a positive sign of spiritual growth under a competent teacher.

## Sufi Structure

Each tariqah in Egypt and Sudan is headed by a primary shaykh who receives a pledge of allegiance (*bay'ah*) from its members. In this way, Sufism encourages a strong tie not only between shaykh and murid but also between murids themselves. As Sufism developed from the 12th century onward, the orders themselves grew from being handfuls of students following one master to large orders with thousands (or hundreds of thousands) of followers. Over time, the various tariqahs have evolved hierarchical structures because not every member can be in touch with the lead shaykh. In some cases, the hierarchy is relatively simple and has few ranks, but in larger *turuq* (such as the Naqshbandiyyah) the hierarchy can be quite elaborate. All *turuq* place great importance on their lineage, which is often referred to as a *silsalah* (Arabic for chain) of authority that connects them directly to the Prophet Muhammad. In a larger gathering place (*zawiyah* in Arabic), it is not uncommon to see a diagram of the spiritual family tree connecting the head of the lineage all the way back to the tariqah's founder, who is in turn connected to the Prophet's companions and then Muhammad himself. Historically, the shaykh was responsible for selecting his most promising student as his successor, but in recent years many *turuq* have become dynastic, with the son or grandson of the shaykh appointed as successor.





The tomb of the Sufi shaykh 'Ali al-Rifa'i was built in the al-Rifa'iyyah mosque for Princess Khushyar, mother of Khedive Isma'il in 1869. (John A. Shoup)

The zawiyah or primary Sufi gathering place is also referred to as a *khanqa* (Persian) or *tekke* (Turkish) in other parts of the Muslim world, although all three terms are used in Egypt. This can be a sizable structure, and the central zawiyah is often near or attached to the tomb of an order's founder; several such *zawaya* (plural of *zawiyah*) can be found in Cairo. When a particular order is small, its members may simply meet in the home of one of the senior members. In cases in which an order is large enough and has enough resources to obtain a building (or has inherited one), the zawiyah may be a small or large compound adjacent to a mosque or a saint's tomb (or both).

## Sufi Tariqas in Egypt

Egypt is home to more than 75 Sufi orders, many of which began as branches of an older *turuq* and eventually split for any number of reasons, including theological divergences, power struggles, and political patronage. Some of these *turuq* are international orders that began outside Egypt and became well established there, and others are *turuq* that developed within Egypt itself. The most prominent Egyptian *turuq* arose in the 13th century CE and include such notable examples as the Badawiyyah, founded in the 13th century by Shaykh Ahmad al-Badawi; the Shadhiliya, founded by the Moroccan scholar Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili; and the Burhaniyya-Disuqiyya, founded by Sidi Ibrahim al-Disuqi and revived in the 20th century in by the Sudanese Shaykh ‘Abdu al-Burhani. Egypt also has members from the large international *turuq*; prominent examples include the Naqshbandiyah, founded in 14th-century Iran; and the Qadiri founded in 12th-century Iraq. These two orders have multiple branches, and a large urban center may have multiple Naqshbandi or Qadiri *zawaya* that belong to alternate branches of the same lineage.

## Sufism and Politics

Sufism may not be political in origin, but Egypt's Sufi *turuq* exercise considerable power when they follow the political leanings of their spiritual leaders. At the same time, Egypt also has faced pressure from the *Salafi* movement, which is violently opposed to the Sufism, and this has led to conflict between followers of these two spiritual camps. The current leaders of the Egyptian *turuq* have issued public statements condemning violence in the name of religion and encouraging reform through piety instead.

**See also:** [Coptic Christianity](#); [Islamic Monuments](#); [Islam on the Nile](#).

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# T

## **TAHA HUSSEIN (1889–1973)**

Taha Hussein was a major Egyptian author and one of the most important Arabic writers of the 20th century. He was born into a lower-middle-class family in the village of 'Izbat al-Kilu in Minya Province in central Upper Egypt. He went blind at age three because his family took him to a local practitioner with little real medical skill or knowledge. He was educated in a *kuttab* (traditional Islamic school) and then admitted to al-Azhar University in Cairo, where he studied Arabic literature. With the founding of Cairo University in 1908, he was admitted despite his poverty and blindness. In 1914, he graduated with a degree in Arabic literature.

In 1914, Hussein went to France and studied the French language while continuing his interests in Arabic literature and history at the University of Montpellier (Miquel and Hussein n.d.). He received a master's degree from Montpellier and was admitted to the Sorbonne for his PhD, which he completed in 1919 (Blandin n.d.). While at Montpellier, he married his French language reader, Suzanne Bresseau.

Hussein is best known for his book *Al-Ayyam (The Days)* (1943), which tells of his life growing up in a small village in Upper Egypt and studying at al-Azhar. This is perhaps his best known work for English speakers. In 1926, he published a book of literary criticism of pre-Islamic poetry called *Fi al-Sh'ir al-Jahali (On Pre-Islamic Poetry)* for which he became famous in the Arab world. His objective stance that the Koran should not be taken as historic fact brought him trouble with al-Azhar, and eventually he lost his job at Cairo University and his book was briefly banned.

Taha Hussein was thought of as the founder of the Egyptian Renaissance and a strong proponent of what was called *Pharaonism*, which holds that Egyptian history and culture are distinct from those of the Arabs. In 1950, King Faruq appointed him education minister, and Hussein tried to put into action his strong

belief that education should be for everyone and not only the rich. He held several chief editor posts with newspapers and journals as well as held several positions with scientific academies in Egypt and around the world. He died in 1972, and his wife, Suzanne, died in 1989. Their two children, Amina and Moenis, are accomplished scholars in their own right.

**See also:** [Najib Mahfuz](#); [Tawfiq al-Hakim](#).

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## TANTA

Tanta is a major city in the Nile River delta of Egypt 58 miles (94 kilometers) north of Cairo. Egypt's fifth largest city has a population of more than one-half million. It is the capital of al-Gharbiyyah Province, a railway hub, and a major producer of cotton textiles. Although the city has an ancient past, during the early Christian period it was the site of a bishopric, although little of this remains to be seen today. The more important evidence is the ruins of Naukratis on the Canopic branch (westernmost branch) of the Nile. The ruins there date mostly to the Ptolemaic period.

Tanta is known for the tomb and shrine of the Sufi saint and Islamic mystic Ahmad al-Badawi (1199–1276). His tomb is the center of major festivals that bring pilgrims from all over Egypt to the city. Originally from Fez, Morocco, al-Badawi went first to Egypt and then to Iraq. While in Iraq, he had a vision from God to go to Tanta in Egypt in 1237. Once in Tanta, he lived the life of an ascetic on the roof of a house, fasting for as many as 40 days at a time. He fought along with the Mamalik (plural of *Mamluk*) against French Crusaders. He died in 1276 and was buried in the house where he had lived on the roof. After being given permission by the Sufi leadership in Iraq to start a new order, he established the *Tariqah al-Badawiyyah* (also called the *Ahmadiyyah*), Egypt's single largest Sufi order.

Every year, Tanta holds three festivals in honor of its greatest Sufi. The largest, *al-mulid al-Kabir*, coincides with the *mulid* (birthday) of the Prophet Muhammad or *al-mulid al-Nabawi*. A second festival is held in October after the cotton harvest and is called *al-mulid Ragab*, although it does not always fall in the Islamic month of Rajab (or Ragab). Such a combination of agricultural harvest festivals with Sufi (and Christian figures) is common in Egypt. Many of the agricultural festivals fall the same time every year, and many use the Coptic calendar, including the second festival honoring Ahmad al-Badawi. The third

festival is much smaller and is called the small *mulid* or *al-mulid al-Saghir*. The festival in October lasts for eight days, and people consume a special sweet made from sugar-covered nuts called *habb al-‘Aziz* or “nuts of the beloved” (meaning the Prophet Muhammad). In fact, Tanta is known for producing special sugar candies and pastries for the *mulids*.

The festivals are held around the great mosque where Sidi Ahmad al-Badawi is buried. The mosque and *zawiyyah* (Sufi meeting house) are fairly new, having been built in the mid-19th century over the ruins of older structures. Originally, a *khalwah* was built over his tomb for Sufis to use for private meditation. The pressure of growing numbers led to the building of a *zawiyyah* for larger group meetings. Subsequently, in the 19th century a much larger mosque was built that included the minaret of the older structure dating to 1773. Many Egyptians start their pilgrimage to Mecca by a visit to Ahmad al-Badawi; as such, he is called *Bab al-Nabi* (“Gateway to the Prophet”). His festivals are included in a round of agricultural fairs and holidays in nearby delta cities such as Disuq.

In addition to the famous mosque and shrine, Tanta is home to a major university, the University of Tanta, which opened in 1972. The city also has a branch of al-Azhar University that provides classes for those unable to go to Cairo to study.

**See also:** [Disuq](#); [Islamic Monuments](#); [Islam on the Nile](#); [Sufism and Sufi Brotherhoods](#).

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## TAWFIQ AL-HAKIM (1898–1987)

Like Taha Hussein and Najib Mahfuz, Tawfiq al-Hakim was among the greats of 20th-century Arabic and Egyptian literature. Unlike the other two, however, Tawfiq al-Hakim came from wealth and high social status. He was born in 1898 in Alexandria. His father was a judge, and his mother was Turkish. His father placed him in public school in Buhayrah Province, but because the province’s secondary schools were of poor quality, Tawfiq was moved to Cairo to live with relatives to finish school.

Al-Hakim moved to Paris to complete his higher education at the Sorbonne, where he studied law. While there, he began to attend the Paris Opera and theater and increasingly wanted to reform theater in Egypt. In 1928, he abandoned his studies and returned to Cairo. In 1933, his first play, *Ahl al-Kahf* (*People of the Cave*) was produced. By dealing with issues important to intellectuals of the time, it began to transform Egyptian theater. The play touches on issues of cultural rebirth, dependence on the past, and possibilities for the future. All of these issues were then facing Egypt and Egyptian nationalists (Allen 2000).

Al-Hakim wrote and published several plays that were meant to be read rather than performed. Other short plays he published in newspapers, sometimes as serials. He used his plays to criticize social issues and to highlight them for the public. He wrote several one-act plays, including *Ughniyat al-Mawt* (*Death Song*), which tells of the issue of revenge in Upper Egypt. In the play, a family anxiously awaits the return of a son who is studying in Cairo so he can carry out murder in revenge for a blood debt. He also criticized the revolution of 1952 and in 1960 openly criticized Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir with his play *al-Sultan al-Ha’ir* (*The Perplexed Sultan*). Set in the time of the Mamalik (plural of *Mamluk*), the character of the sultan “discovers” after being made sultan that he is still legally a slave and therefore “unfit” to rule. He uses force to legitimize his position (Allen 2000).

Tawfiq al-Hakim is the founder of modern Arabic drama. He replaced the

earlier attempts at theater that had been based mostly on European models so that it became a truly Arab theater. His plays tackled important issues for the time, and even though his plays were not always popular with audiences they are important to the development of drama. He was a major influence on a generation of new play writers not only in Egypt but also in the entire Arab world (Allen 2000).

Al-Hakim married late in life and had two children. Both his wife and son died before he did. He was survived by his daughter.

**See also:** [Najib Mahfuz](#); [Taha Hussein](#).

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## TAYIB SALIH (1929–2009)

Tayib Salih was one of Sudan's greatest authors of the 20th century. He published novels, short stories, and novellas that drew from his experience growing up in the village of Karmakol in al-Shamaliyyah (Northern) Province in Sudan. His ability to recount the lives of ordinary people led to fame not only in his native Sudan but also throughout the Arab world and beyond.

Salih began his studies at the University of Khartoum but then left for England to finish his studies at the University of London. He spent 10 years in England and worked for the BBC's Arabic language service and wrote a column for the London-based Arabic language journal *al-Majallah*. He explored different literary genre while writing for *al-Majallah*.

In 1966, Salih published his first major novel, the one for which he is best known: *Mawsim al-Hijrah ila al-Shamal (Season of Migration to the North)*. The work recounts a set of frame stories, or stories inside stories, that show his ability to understand and portray the lives of ordinary Sudanese and his deep knowledge of Britain and the English. The novel was translated into many other languages, the English translation appearing in 1969. The novel was published in Lebanon in 2001 and brought the attention of the Arab Literary Academy, which named it one of the best novels in Arabic of the 20th century. Despite worldwide acclaim for the author, the book was banned in Sudan for many years.

In 1969, Salih published his second major work, *'Urs al-Zayn (Wedding of Zayn)*, a novella. It was published in Lebanon along with a collection of seven short stories as *'Urs al-Zayn wa Saba' Qisas* (the book's success would come largely from the Lebanese edition). It is a straightforward narrative of the wedding of Zayn, an unlikely groom—who is described as tall, gangly, ugly, and not bright—to the most beautiful girl in the village. The comic nature of the story does not hide its strong moralist points; beauty and value have more to them than what shows at the surface. In the story, the Sufi shaykh, Haneen, sees the true value and beauty of Zayn as does his bride Na'imah. The work was

made into a stage play, and the Kuwaiti filmmaker Khalid Siddiq won an award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1976 for the film version (Armes 2010.)

Leaving London, Salih moved to Doha, Qatar where he was the minister of information. He worked in Doha for nearly 10 years before taking his final position with the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris and as a UNESCO representative to the Arab Gulf states.

Not officially recognized or congratulated in his home country, his friends in Sudan took up a collection for him and raised \$20,000 from private donors. Salih wanted the money to be used for the youth of Sudan instead. He organized the al-Tayib Salih Prize for Creative Writing to encourage Sudanese youth to become interested in literature. The prize was first awarded in 2003, and in 2008 the ‘Abd al-Karim al-Mirghani Cultural Center launched another literary award in his name. He died in 2009 in London.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Arrival of Christianity and Islam.](#)

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## THESIGER, WILFRED (1910–2003)

Wilfred Patrick Thesiger was born in 1910 in Addis Abba, the son of British consul-general Wilfred Gilbert Thesiger and Kathleen Mary Vigors-Thesiger (Asher 1995, p. 21). He was the grandson of Frederic Thesiger, Second Baron of Chelmsford, who was famous for losing an entire army to the Zulus in South Africa in 1879. Wilfred Thesiger was among the last of the great explorers of the age.

Thesiger was educated in Britain, first at Eton and then at Oxford. While a child in England, he chose anticolonial fighters to admire such as the Moroccan 'Abd al-Karim Khattabi. He once remarked that he felt a closer connection to the Zulu who defeated his grandfather than his grandfather or British soldiers.

He returned to Africa in 1930 and attended the coronation of Haile Selassie in Addis Ababa. He then headed a Royal Geographic Society expedition in 1933 to map the Awash River and to the Lake Abbe in the Danakil region (Asher 1995, p. 82). He was the first European to enter the Aussa sultanate and described Sultan Muhammad Yayu as "highly xenophobic" and his Afar tribesmen as taking delight in killing outsiders (Asher 1995, p. 82). Eventually, the sultan agreed to allow the party into his lands. Thesiger then joined the British colonial service in Sudan and was stationed in Darfur and in the Upper Nile. While serving in Darfur, he decided to take local guides and explore to the west, arriving in French-held Tibesti in Chad in 1938 (Asher 1995, p. 166).

During World War II, Thesiger served with British forces in Africa. He was initially stationed at the border post of Gallabat and fought in the British reconquest of Ethiopia. He joined the Special Air Service in Egypt's Western Desert and the Druze Legion in Syria. In Syria, he was greatly impressed by the Bedouin and decided he would dedicate his life to finding the "pure" Arab of the desert. In 1945, he would do this by joining the antilocust service, which gave him the chance to explore southern Arabia.

He began his journeys into the back country and deserts of Oman, and these were his happiest moments. He found the Bedouin of southern Arabia to be hard men toughened by the harsh environment. He decided he would cross the Empty

Quarter, a vast, empty desert of dunes. Only two Europeans had crossed the Empty Quarter before—St. John Philby and Bertram Thomas—but neither had traversed it completely from one side to the other. He selected a few men from the Rashid and Bayt Kathir tribes to accompany him. Between 1945 and 1950 he made two crossings of the desert and several other trips into parts of southern Arabia (Oman and Yemen). His trips ended when the hostile Duru‘ in conjunction with the Imam of Nizwa tried to arrest him.

Thesiger made his name as an explorer with the published accounts of his travels called *Arabian Sands* (1959). He wrote other travel books about his wanderings among the Marsh Arabs (1960), the Kurds of northern Iraq, and tribesmen in Afghanistan (1998). He also visited Yemen during its civil war between republicans and monarchists in the 1960s. The result was a continuing reputation of hard travel using camels, mules, and horses as well as traveling on foot.

He moved to Kenya to live among the Samburu in 1968 and moved between England and Kenya until his health forced him to return to England, where he died in 2003.

**See also:** [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Haile Selassie I.](#)

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## TIS ISAT FALLS

Tis Isat Falls is a waterfall along the upper Blue Nile River in Ethiopia. The name in Amharic means “smoke of the fire,” a reference to the great mist thrown up by the falls. The waterfall is also known as the “Blue Nile Falls” and the “Tis Abbai” (or “Tis Abay”). “Abbai” (or “Abay”) is the Ethiopian name for the Blue Nile. Travelers throughout history have described the falls as one of the most spectacular in Africa and the greatest cataract of the entire Nile system. In recent years, hydroelectric projects near the falls have diverted much of the water and greatly diminished the flow over the falls.



Blue Nile Falls in northern Ethiopia is a waterfall on the Blue Nile river. It is known as Tis Abay in Amharic, meaning smoking water. It is situated on the upper course of the river, about 30 kilometers downstream from the town of Bahir Dar and Lake Tana. The falls are considered one of Ethiopia's best known tourist attractions. ([Zaramira/Dreamstime.com](http://Zaramira/Dreamstime.com))

Eighteen miles downstream from the Blue Nile's beginning at Lake Tana, the river plunges a dramatic 150 feet (45 meters) over the sheer volcanic face of Tis Isat Falls and into the narrow, deep gorge below. The cataract consists of four separate sections. At the end of the wet season in September when the river is at its highest, the width of the falls is more than 1,500 feet (457 meters). The roar of the falls is deafening, and the mist produced can be seen from a great

distance. Perpetual rainbows grace the falls, which are said by locals to be the Saint Mary's belt that she left behind when she visited Lake Tana. The lush, damp vegetation along the sides is home to monkeys, a variety of birds, and sometimes pythons. During the dry season, the level of the river is reduced and only flows over the main section.

The first European to report visiting Tis Isat was Jeronimo Lobo, a Jesuit priest, in the early 17th century. Lobo claimed to have climbed onto a shelf behind the falls to look out at the rainbows through the falling water. More than a century later, Scottish explorer James Bruce traveled to the site in October 1770. He described the falls as the most magnificent sight he had ever seen, the sound and rush of water enough to make him dizzy. He declared that it was impossible for anyone to climb to the shelf described by Lobo and called the priest a liar. British consul Major R. E. Cheesman, who mapped the Blue Nile in the 1920s, attributed the conflicting accounts to the seasonal difference in the flow of the river. Cheesman also speculated that the location could be exploited for hydroelectric power but hoped that such a project would not take away the magnificence of the falls.

Two hydroelectric power stations, the Tis Abay I, commissioned in 1964, and the larger Tis Abay II, commissioned in 2001, now use the Blue Nile's waters to generate power for domestic use and export. A weir above Tis Isat diverts as much as 90 percent of the river into a channel west of the falls where it passes through the stations before it is returned to the river farther downstream and beyond the falls. Although at times the river can be returned to its natural path, what largely remains of Tis Isat Falls is a barren lava cliff.

**See also:** [Blue Nile River](#); [Bruce, James](#); [Lake Tana](#).



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## TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS OF SOUTHERN SUDAN

Many of the peoples of South Sudan still adhere to traditional religions despite attempts by the British to convert them to Christianity and the government of Sudan to convert them to Islam. Today, some 50 percent of southern Sudanese still practice traditional religions or combine traditional belief with either Christianity or Islam. Christians form the majority of the remaining 50 percent, and the small percentage of Muslims is found mainly among the Nuba and the Ngok Dinka.

Traditional religions fall into three main types: the one creator god of the Nilotic peoples, ancestors reached through a medium of the Nuba, and respect for spirits and magic of the Bantu. The majority of southern Sudanese are Nilotic, and their religion focuses on a creator god called *Kwoth* by the Nuer, *Juok* by the Shilluk, and *Nhialac* by the Dinka.

Among the Shilluk, their cultural hero, *Nyikang*, acts as a mediator between the individual and the creator Juok. Nyikang's spirit is reborn in the person of the divine king (*reth*) who rules the Shilluk. Nyikang is associated with the Nile River and is said to have been the son of Okwa, a Shilluk king, and the daughter of Donyel, a river spirit, who on one side was a human and on the other a crocodile. Okwa raped Donyel's two daughters, but eventually Donyel agreed to allow them to marry Okwa. Other legends about Nyikang link him to the river and crocodiles. When the Shilluk came to their current area of southern Sudan in the 15th century, Nyikang used magic powers to help them cross the crocodile-infested waters of the White Nile. Because Nyikang's mother is associated with the Nile and was herself part crocodile, the people leave offerings on the river

bank to honor her and other creatures of the water (Stokes 2009, pp. 631–632).

The Shilluk also believed that Nyikang struggled with the sun, who had stolen one of Nyikang's cows. Nyikang's victory over the sun is celebrated yearly with the start of the rainy season when the rains overcome the sun. The rains symbolize the return of the stolen cow. Nyikang and his warrior son Dak are also celebrated at the start of a new reth's reign. To be selected as the new reth, the candidate must be from the same lineage as the reth or the *Kwareth*. In recent years, the candidate is selected by two paramount chiefs but must be confirmed by a committee of 14 other chiefs (Stokes 2009, pp. 631). Once this is done, representations of Nyikang and Dak are paraded and the new reth is crowned. At that time it is believed the spirit of Nyikang enters the body of the reth. Tales from the past of duels between the reth and his son for the throne seemed to prove James Frazer's theory of divine king and helped bring his book *The Golden Bough* popular fame. His use of the Shilluk example made them well known to Western readers.

The cosmologies of the Nuer are equally as elaborate but deal more directly with the creator god and are not tied to any political or religious position. For the Nuer, Kwoth is directly accessible; they pray to him and offer him cattle sacrifices. The Nuer have the quasi-religious and quasi-political position of the leopard-skin chief who acts as a mediator in conflict resolution and not as a priest.

The Dinka believe the creator, Nhialac, has many helping spirits or *yeeth* (*yath* singular). Deng defines these spirits as "clan spirits" and says there are "independent ones" or *jak* (*jok* singular) and further notes that the *yeeth* are protective spirits while the *jak* are destructive (Stokes 2009, p. 122). In Dinka belief, Nhialac was offended by a woman and withdrew from the world, leaving his helping spirits as mediators between him and humankind. The Dinka believe that illness and accidents are caused by natural forces, so they seek assistance from mediums and diviners to affect cures.

The Nuba of the Nuba Mountains believe in the powers of ancestors who are able to be contacted for assistance. Contact is done through a diviner called a *kujur*. A *kujur* can be male or female and "consulted in all aspects of life, including when to plant and harvest crops" (Shaw 2011, p. 226). The Nuba have been under great pressure to convert to Christianity or Islam, and little of their traditional religion still exists.

On the western fringe of South Sudan and near its borders with the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) live

several Bantu peoples, the best known and studied being the Azande or Zande. The Azande were the subject of the first studies by British anthropologist Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard starting in the 1920s. In addition to their creator god, *Mboli*, a large number of natural forces can be focused by witches, people who can cause both good or bad to happen simply by thinking it. The Azande realize the person him-or herself may not know they have power, and a set of different divining tools are used to understand who or what has caused something to happen. The most important method is called *benge* in which chickens are poisoned and whether or not they live or die answers the question being asked (Singer 1982) Most of the Azande are Catholics today, although the church does not provide sufficient answers to their questions and most still rely on their traditional belief system.

**See also:** [Dinka](#); [Fashoda \(Kodok\)](#); [Nuba](#); [Nuer](#); [Shilluk](#).

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### UMM KULTHUM (C. 1898–1975)

Umm Kulthum was one of the greatest 20th-century singers in the Arab world, her career lasting from the 1910s to her death in 1975. She was often compared with the great American singer Ella Fitzgerald. She had a range of three octaves, and the power of her voice was so great that she had to stand three feet (one meter) behind a microphone to keep from overpowering the sound system. The date of Umm Kulthum's birth is not known and varies from source to source. Virginian Danielson, a leading expert on her life, notes that the local records in Daqahliyyah Province gives her date of birth as May 4, 1904 (Danielson 1997, p. 21). This date has been challenged by others because her public performance began in 1910, which would have made her just five years old at the time.

Umm Kulthum came from a poor rural family, but her father was al-Shaykh Ibrahim al-Sayyad al-Baltaji, *imam* (religious leader) of the village mosque in Tammay al-Zahayrah in the Nile River delta. Shaykh Ibrahim made extra money by singing religious songs at celebrations and allowed his sons to go with him. Umm Kulthum entered the traditional Islamic school in her home village, and even though her father mildly objected to her remaining longer than other girls, her mother encouraged Umm Kulthum to go further in her education and convinced her father to let her continue.

Umm Kulthum originally sang with her father and brothers dressed in "Bedouin" clothes that helped hide that fact she was a girl. Her father was embarrassed to have his daughter seen on stage, but as Umm Kulthum grew up her fame increased. Between 1910 and 1920, her fees increased and she came to the attention of several aristocratic families who had property in the delta. In 1917, she entertained the family and guests of Muhammad 'Izz al-Din Bey in his house in Hilwan, a southern suburb of Cairo (Danielson 1997, p. 32). Umm Kulthum could now abandon her Bedouin boys' robes and be recognized as a female. Between 1920 and 1922, she performed for Cairo's upper class in many

important venues, and by 1922 her career was shooting upward.

Umm Kulthum entered Cairo's entertainment world at a time when many other female singers were beginning their careers and initially had major competition from not only Egyptian but also Syrian singers who flocked to Cairo for the patronage of Egypt's upper class. These included others who would become famous such as Layla Murad, Munirah al-Mahdiyyah, and Nadirah 'Ali. Umm Kulthum was unwilling to leave Egypt as the others did to make money entertaining Arab audiences in other countries and did not leave Egypt until her first concert in Syria in 1931 (Danielson 1997, p. 67).

When talking movies began in Egypt, among the first major formats was the musical. Although she was now a well-known star, Umm Kulthum only agreed to make six films between 1935 and 1947 even though she realized films increased her fame and money (Darwish 1998, p. 18). In 1934, Umm Kulthum was selected to "open" the new Radio Cairo broadcast and in 1944 was selected to sing for King Faruq. Despite singing for the King, she became a close friend of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir and was among the Egyptian artists who sang patriotic songs in praise of the new leader. Between 1950 and 1960, Umm Kulthum sang more patriotic songs than ever before and more than she would sing after. Following the 1967 war with Israel, she went on a worldwide tour and donated the monies she earned to the state.

In the 1940s, Umm Kulthum had embarked on a risky path by deciding to sing only classical *qasa'id* or epic poems in mostly classical Arabic. She was joined in this by several well-known poets and songwriters such as Riyadh al-Sunbati and Muhammad al-Qasbi. Being schooled in Koran, Umm Kulthum often made word changes in the poems written for her, and her diction was the finest of any singer of her time because of her schooling (*Umm Kulthum* 1996). Although she no longer starred in films, in 1963 she lent her singing voice to actress Nabilah 'Ubayd, who lip-synched the words in the film *Rab'ah al-'Adawiyyah* on the life of an early female Sufi.

On stage, Umm Kulthum held a long scarf in her hand to signal her orchestra and then respond to what her audiences liked, noting where they clapped, sighed, or otherwise indicated they appreciated a specific line. She used her handkerchief to indicate lines to be repeated. She became the symbol not only of Egypt but also of the entire Arab and Muslim world. Her music is also still listened to outside the Arab world in Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Umm Kulthum was nicknamed "The Voice of Egypt" and "The Star of the East," but she was most affectionately known as "Souma." Her fame in the Arab

world was such that she was even able to reconcile Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir and Habib Bourquiba of Tunisia. When she died in 1975, 4 million people attended her funeral, making it one of the largest in history. The mourners even briefly took the coffin from members of the military who were marching with it, though they were later able to recover it. Senegalese singer Youssou N’Dour dedicated his 2004 album *Egypt* in her memory.

**See also:** [Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir \(Gamal Abdel Nasser\)](#); [King Faruq](#).

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## ‘UTHMAN DIQNA (C. 1840–1926)

‘Uthman Diqna, also written as Osman Digna, was an important leader of the Hadandawa of the Beja tribes that live on the eastern bank of the Nile River near the Red Sea coast as far north as Luxor and south into modern Eritrea. The Beja are camel-herding nomads, much like the Arabic-speaking Bedouin. The year of ‘Uthman’s birth is not known but ranges from 1836 to 1840 in different sources. He was born perhaps in the Red Sea city Suakin as ‘Uthman ‘Ali; the name “Diqna” was a nickname for his beard (from the Beja word *diqn* meaning chin.)

‘Uthman Diqna was first a slave trader in Alexandria Egypt, but once his business was closed because of European pressure on the khedive of Egypt, he seems to have joined the ‘Urabi Rebellion and fought the British at Tell al-Kabir. Following the Egyptian defeat, he returned to Sudan and joined the rebellion of Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi and rose quickly in the ranks to the level of *amir* or commander. He organized his own people, the Hadandawa, into an effective wing of the Mahdi’s army that kept the British in the Red Sea port of Suakin and a few nearby posts. His forces defeated British troops in 1884 at the first Battle of El Teb that left two-thirds of the British dead and defeated them later the same year at Tokar (Barthorp 1988, p. 86).

The British and Egyptian forces were reinforced and in the same year, 1884, pushed out in greater numbers to try to break through to the besieged garrison at Khartoum. At the second Battle of El Teb, the British use of machine guns, artillery, and heavy rifle fire defeated ‘Uthman’s men, who were armed mostly with leather shields and swords. This was followed closely by the Battle of Tamai (or Tamanieh) Wells. ‘Uthman Diqna’s men nearly defeated the British, expertly exploiting a gap between the British squares and slaughtering the navy

personnel who were manning machine guns. In the end, the British were able to regroup and pushed back ‘Uthman’s men. It was a victory for the British. and ‘Uthman’s forces withdrew into Sudan. However, the British high command ordered a retreat back to Suakin, where a small garrison held the town until the British reconquest of Sudan in 1898.

In 1888, ‘Uthman’s forces tried to take Suakin but were driven back. In 1891, Anglo–Egyptian forces took the town of Tokar. For the first time, tribesmen deserted ‘Uthman for the Anglo–Egyptian side. ‘Uthman withdrew again into the Red Sea hills to regroup his forces. ‘Uthman’s forces in the desert and hills to the east of Nile were not heavily involved with the fighting that ended the Mahdist state in 1898. He did participate in the Battle of Atbara with *Amir* Mahmud in 1898, but ‘Uthman escaped with several thousand men. He fought again at the Battle of Umm Diwaykarat in 1899 but again escaped although wounded. He was finally caught in 1900 and sent to Egypt, where he spent eight years before being released. He never returned to Sudan, living out his last years in Egypt.

**See also:** [History of Sudan: Modern Period](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#).

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# W

## **WADI HALFA**

Wadi Halfa is located in Sudan on the southern shores of Lake Nasser, which is called Lake Nubia in Sudan. Its current population is approximately 16,000 people, and the town serves as the terminal for shipping lines on the lake, both passenger and freight. The town is home to several thousand Nubian people displaced by the Aswan High Dam, but the town was already important starting in the 19th century with the Egyptian conquest of 1820–21.

Originally, the town was a quiet village on the eastern bank of the Nile River, but in 1820 the Egyptian army used it as a staging base for its conquest of Sudan. When the Mahdi challenged Egyptian rule, the town was taken by his forces as they moved north to engage the Egyptians and British forces at Tushki. Being close to the border, the town suffered from the conflict between the powers. The town became even more important when Horatio Herbert Kitchener chose it as his headquarters when he moved into Sudan for its reconquest in 1895. Kitchener wanted to ensure his victory by introducing aspects of “modern” life to Sudan. Steamships had been functioning on the Nile since Khedive Isma‘il’s time, and there had already been attempts to introduce the telegraph and railways since 1866. However, they were not successful until Kitchener made sure they were introduced to assist his movement of troops and information.

In 1897, the railway made it to Wadi Halfa and then was extended to Atbara and al-‘Ubayd. Eventually, he linked most of the country by rail. Between 1911 and 1931, Wadi Halfa became an important station for the Nile because the first dam at Aswan needed to be monitored for any changes it caused. Wadi Halfa also remained an important military post into World War II as an important base between Italian-held Libya and Ethiopia. Among its more famous British buildings was the Railroad Hotel, which was built in the 1930s.

Eventually, with the building of the High Dam at Aswan, the original town

had to be moved. When this happened, Wadi Halfa became the scene of violent protests against the dam and the subsequent flood that would nearly cover all of ancient Nubia. The protests were broken up by the police and eventually the town's inhabitants had to move to New Wadi Halfa in 1964. The new town became a relocation center for Sudanese Nubians, although some preferred to move to settlements farther south and keep their ancient connection with the Nile. Archeologists made massive efforts to find and catalog as much of Nubia's heritage as possible before the waters behind the dam covered them.

**See also:** [Kitchener, Horatio Herbert](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#).

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### **WESTERN CHRISTIANITY ON THE NILE**

Christianity is not new on the Nile, but the Islamization of Egypt and Sudan left small numbers of Eastern Christians, mostly belonging to the Coptic Church, the indigenous Christianity of Egypt. They remain the majority in Ethiopia. Among the more famous Western Christians who traveled to Egypt was St. Francis of Assisi, who accompanied the crusade of 1219 in an effort to convert Ayyubid Sultan al-Kamil (ruled 1218–1238).

Western Christianity did not make much headway until 1848 when the khedive of Egypt allowed a Catholic mission to be established in Sudan. The pro-Western Khedive Sa'id (ruled 1854–1863) gave the mission his official sanction (Wheeler 1991). The Catholic missionaries in the north were greatly resented by Muslim Sudanese as were the non-Muslim Europeans the khedive hired to administer the country. In 1862, the pope decided to close all of the missions in Sudan because 46 missionaries had died or been killed between 1848 and 1861 (Wheeler 1991). In 1873, the pope authorized new missions to Sudan. All Christian missions, however, were closed during the Mahdiyyah period (1881–1898) but reopened following the British conquest.

The British allowed both the Anglican Church and American Presbyterian churches to open missions in the South. Generally speaking, the Nile River

served as the “border” between Protestants and Catholics, with the Catholics allowed to work on the west bank of the river and the Protestants on the east bank. In all, 12 different Christian organizations established missions, including the Coptic Church.

The British policy, in fact, was to split Sudan between an Arab and Muslim north and an African and Christian south. The missions were encouraged to spread the English language (instead of Arabic) and Christianity among the indigenous peoples. This policy has had disastrous results for Sudan. Today, many of the missions have closed again, been forced to relocate, or have curtail their activities because of continued fighting in the south. The largest number of Sudanese Christians are Catholic, numbering more than 2 million; of the nine dioceses in Sudan, only two are in the north (“Archdiocese of Juba” n.d.).

In Uganda, the Baganda king, *Kabaka* Mutesa I, allowed both Christian and Muslim missions into his lands, and in 1877 he allowed the London-based Christian Missionary Society to send a mission to Uganda. Mutesa himself outwardly converted to Islam, learned to speak some Swahili and Arabic, and surrounded himself with what he called “readers,” men who could read Arabic (Moorehead 2000, p. 319). He also allowed the French White Fathers to open missions, and the conflict between British Protestants and French Catholics initially helped Islam, which presented no such conflict because all Arab and Swahili Muslims in Uganda were Sunni. Nonetheless, Mutesa seemed to begin to distance himself from Islam and allowed Christian readers in his court. The conflict between the Catholics and Protestants, however, began to annoy him and he eventually turned on them both.

In 1884, Mutesa I died and was succeeded by his son, Mwanga II, who could not control the religious war in his country. Finally, in 1894, Uganda became a British protectorate and the religious war ended.

The British authorities supported the Anglicans of the Christian Missionary Society, even making the Anglican bishop the third most important person in the colonial hierarchy (Ward n.d.) The Catholic Church did not have such support; although it was allowed to continue functioning, it was never considered to be official. Over time, Uganda became one of the most Christian of all colonial possessions, with the majority of its people converting. Today, Catholics outnumber Protestants with more than 40 percent of the population Catholic and 35 percent Anglican (United States Department of State 2009).

**See also:** [Buganda](#); [Coptic Christianity](#); [Islam on the Nile](#); [Mutesa I](#).

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## WHITE NILE RIVER

The White Nile (*al-Nil al-Abyad* in Arabic) makes the Nile River the longest in the world, yet even today, there is no agreement to its length. This is a result of the continual controversy over the length of the rivers and streams that supply Lake Victoria. The main source for Lake Victoria is the Kagera River, which drains the Ruwenzori Mountains, the Mountains of the Moon of antiquity. The sources of the Kagera are in question with new discoveries of sources deep in the mountains, but the accepted length of the Kagera is 450 miles (724 kilometers). Since the 1930s, the Ruvyironza River in Burundi is also accepted as a source for Lake Victoria. Although the Kagera is the longest tributary of Lake Victoria, the Ruvyironza is the most southerly.

## Papyrus

The papyrus plant is a wetland of sedges and reeds and was one of the titles held by the pharaoh —“He of sedge and bee”—which noted the two main divisions of Egypt: Upper and Lower. Papyrus was a physical representation of Lower Egypt. Papyrus was called *wadj*, *tjufy*, and *djet* in ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Latin, but it was *papuros* from which our word *paper* derives. In the past, papyrus grew in large areas of the Nile River delta and was used for everything from boats to structural pillars in buildings to baskets and sandals. Representation of bound papyrus was carried on in ancient stone Egyptian architecture. In central Africa, where the plant still grows wild, more than 75 percent of all woven goods (baskets and other household goods) are made from papyrus stalks.

Papyrus was first used for writing early in history—since the early dynastic period (before 3000 BCE). A new piece of paper was easily made by simply slicing open the reed from top to bottom and spreading it out. Using only the inside of the plant, several layers of reeds were placed over each other, one layer running lengthwise and the next running the width of the desired paper. Rough edges were cut off using a knife, and a roller or hammer was used to press the stems together. The end product was smoothed with a rock, and it was possible not only to write but also draw on the



piece. Papyrus was easy to make and less valuable than parchment, which is made from animal skin.

Papyrus stands in the delta eventually were destroyed as agriculture expanded. By the end of the 18th century, papyrus no longer grew wild in Egypt. The largest stands of wild papyrus are now in the Sudd in what is South Sudan and along the rivers south of the Sudd. In 1962, Egyptian engineer Dr. Hasan Ragab created an artificial space to grow papyrus in Cairo and make new papyrus paper.

In 1938, German explorer Burkhardt Waldecker found the most distant source of the Nile in Burundi—the Ruvyironza River. The river is a tributary to the Kagera; near the border of Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania, it joins the Nyabarongo River at Rusumo Falls to become the Kagera. To denote the importance of the Nile to Egypt, Waldecker erected a pyramid at the source of the Ruvyironza at a place called Rutovu. The water basin divide is not only between the Congo and the Nile but also between the Nile and Lake Tanganyika.

The White Nile actually begins at Lake No just above the great Sudd swamp in the Southern Sudan and its total length from emergence from Lake No to where it joins the Blue Nile at Khartoum to form the Nile River is 750 miles (1,207 kilometers). The official length of the Nile, 4,175 miles (6,719 kilometers) is composed mainly of the course of the Nile below Khartoum which is made of a number of Niles combined. When the Nile emerges from Lake Victoria, it is called the Victoria Nile and it flows through Uganda to first Lake Kyoga and then to Lake Albert. It plunges down Murchison Falls, 141 feet (43 meters), and then re-emerges a short distance from the dramatic falls as the Albert Nile. When it reaches the border between Uganda and Sudan, its name changes to *Bahr al-Jabal* or the Mountain River and continues until it reaches Lake No. Another river empties its waters into the Nile in Uganda, the Achwa or Aswa. At Lake No, another central African tributary joins it, *Bahr al-Ghazal* or the Ghazal River (445 miles or 716 kilometers long). Before it reaches the Sudd swamp, a smaller branch breaks off from the Bahr al-Ghazal, the *Bahr al-Zaraf* or the Giraffe River, that rejoins the Nile after it emerges from the Sudd.



**The White Nile flows through wetlands in South Sudan. Such wetlands form the Sudd that absorb most of the flood waters before the White Nile emerges. (John [Wollwerth/Dreamstime.com](#))**

The White Nile is also fed by the Sobat, the first of the Ethiopian tributaries to enter it near the town of Malakal. The Sobat is 220 miles (354 kilometers) long and drains the Ethiopian highlands north of the Omo River basin in southwestern Ethiopia. The Adar River (*Khor Adar* in Arabic, *Yal* in Dinka) adds to the flow of the White Nile and is the last supply of freshwater until the White Nile reaches the Blue Nile at Khartoum.

Much of the floodwaters from Central African sources are blocked and absorbed by the Sudd swamp. The White Nile supplies most of the water for the Nile during winter months—up to 85 percent. The Blue Nile’s swift descent onto the plains of Sudan supplies nearly all of the water in the Nile in the summer months, its flow so strong that it backs up the White Nile for five miles (eight kilometers) before the White Nile can force its way back and mix with the Blue Nile. In fact, even in the winter when the flow of the White Nile is more, the two waters are distinguishable as they flow side by side before mixing. The color difference between the two rivers gives them their names. The Blue Nile carries 90 percent of the silt that had once been so useful to Egypt’s yearly flood but is now lost behind the Aswan Dam.

**See also:** [Aswan Dam, Low and High](#); [Blue Nile River](#); [Lake Albert](#); [Lake Kyoga](#); [Lake Victoria](#); [Sudd](#).

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## **WINGATE, ORDE (1903–1944)**

Major-General Orde Charles Wingate was a World War II British officer who participated in campaigns in Palestine, Ethiopia, and Burma. He was recognized as a military genius for his unconventional use of guerilla warfare. Wingate's philosophy was that a small, mobile, and well-trained force could eventually destroy a large army. Wingate was a controversial figure. He was not only dynamic and fearless but also eccentric and intolerant. He inspired his troops, made enemies of his superiors, and was passionate about the missions entrusted to him.

Wingate was born into a military family, a relative of Sir Reginald Wingate, a former governor-general in Sudan. Wingate was brought up in a stern evangelical family and always carried a bible. At the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, he had a reputation of being untidy, surly, and a risk taker, traits that stayed with him throughout life. After the academy, he served in the Sudanese Defense Force patrolling the Blue Nile region of Sudan, where he learned guerilla warfare tactics from Arabs in the area (Dayan 1976, p. 45). While serving in Palestine from 1936 to 1939 he became an ardent Zionist. He led Jewish settlers in nighttime raids against Arab attackers and trained Jewish soldiers in guerilla warfare, among them Moshe Dayan, later to be a famous Israeli commander. Wingate was known for his endurance and bravery—and his eccentricities. He was shabby, ate onions like apples, and wore an alarm clock on his wrist instead of a watch. Eventually he angered the British command and was recalled to London.

In 1940, Ethiopia was under Italian occupation and Emperor Haile Selassie was in exile in England. Inside Ethiopia, bands of “patriots” resisted the occupation but were unorganized and often fought each other. When Italy joined World War II against Britain, Prime Minister Winston Churchill called for Selassie's return to Ethiopia to give spirit to the patriot movement. Selassie was flown to Khartoum, where he met Wingate, who was chosen to lead the mission with a special unit named the “Gideon Force.” While regular British forces invaded Ethiopia from the north and south, Wingate's mission was to enter Ethiopia from Sudan, neutralize an estimated 40,00 Italian troops, and bring

Selassie safely to the capital of Addis Ababa. The Gideon Force consisted of just one Sudanese battalion, one Ethiopian battalion, and a handful of small Ethiopian units (Thesiger 1987, pp. 318–319).

Led by Wingate, the Gideon Force with Selassie entered the western Gojjam Province of Ethiopia in January 1941, trekking inland up the escarpment into the highlands. Local patriots rallied to the emperor and joined the Gideon Force in attacking Italian forts. Wingate personally led many of the night attacks. Patriots called him “traffic police officer of the bullet” because of his oblivion to personal danger (Hilton 207, p. 122). These nightly attacks convinced the Italian garrisons they were facing a huge invasion force and they evacuated. One by one, the Italian forts were swiftly “liberated.” The last Italian stronghold in Gojjam was the city of Debra Markos near the Blue Nile. Nightly raids on the garrison demoralized the Italians, and many of their Ethiopian conscripts deserted. Finally, the Italians abandoned the city and fled across the Blue Nile gorge. Angered that the Italians had escaped, Wingate sent Wilfred Thesiger, a Gideon Force officer, with a company of Sudanese after them. Selassie entered Debra Markos in triumph on April 6, the same day Italians in Addis Ababa surrendered to British troops. A month later, on May 5, 1941, Selassie entered the capital to tremendous jubilation and thousands of patriots lining the streets. Leading the victory parade was Wingate riding a white horse followed by the emperor in an open air car.

Wingate and the Gideon Force had accomplished their mission, but Wingate was not yet satisfied. From Addis Ababa, he set out with a small force in pursuit of the fleeing army from Debra Markos. The 12,000-strong Italian army (Bierman and Smith 1999, p. 207) was harassed nightly by Thesiger’s force as it was heading north to join other Italian forces. Wingate met up with Thesiger and sent him ahead of the Italians while Wingate’s force attacked from the rear. Trapped and suffering heavy losses, the Italians surrendered—a large army force to a few determined men. Soon after, Wingate was sent out of Ethiopia. In Cairo, with no job, depressed and suffering from malaria, Wingate attempted suicide. He eventually recovered and was later sent to Burma, where his exploits against the Japanese brought him fame. He died in a plane crash in Burma in 1944 at age 41. He was eventually buried in a mass grave in Arlington Cemetery in Washington D.C. A secondary school in Addis Ababa was named for him to honor his role in Ethiopia.

**See also:** [Blue Nile River](#); [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Haile Selassie I](#); [Thesiger, Wilfred](#).

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# Y

**YOHANNES IV (R. 1872–1889)** Yohannes IV is one of three strong Ethiopian emperors of the late 19th century who paved the way for the development of modern Ethiopia. Most of his time was spent defending the northern and western regions from foreign invasion and preserving Ethiopian independence. He had little time to devote to internal issues but was able to unify the major provinces under his rule and end a century of anarchy and civil war.

Before taking the throne, Yohannes was known as Kassa Mercha, a powerful, independent chieftain in the northern highland province of Tigray. In 1868, Kassa aided a British expeditionary force sent to rescue hostages being held by Emperor Tewodros II; the mission resulted in the emperor's defeat and death. Grateful for Kassa's assistance, the British on their return march gave him a large supply of modern weaponry. With this windfall of arms, Kassa was able to defeat other rivals for the throne and claim the crown for himself. He was crowned Yohannes IV in 1872 and would reign for 17 years.

By the time Yohannes took the throne, Egypt was in possession of Sudan and the Red Sea coast and had its sights on Ethiopia. Early in his reign, Yohannes fought off invading Egyptian forces in two decisive battles in 1875 and 1876, ending Egyptian ambitions of conquering Ethiopia. He then turned his attention to unifying the rebellious provinces of Begemder, Gojjam, and Shewa and bringing them under his authority, although allowing a degree of independence. Passionately Christian, he presided over a religious dispute, making his decree the law of the land, and he campaigned to Christianize pagans and Muslims within his realm, sometimes by force.

In the 1880s foreign invaders approached from two fronts. To the east, Italy took control of key Red Sea ports with the intention of expanding inland. From Sudan to the north and west, the Dervish forces of Mohamad Ahmad, the Mahdi, were threatening Christian Ethiopia. Attacks and skirmishes along the borders increased. In 1885, the Ethiopian army under the leadership of *Ras Alula*,

Yohannes's most valued commander, fought off a major attack by the Mahdists in the north between Kassala and Asmara. Two years later, *Ras Alula* defeated an Italian force at Dogali that had advanced inland from the port of Massawa. The Italians were forced temporarily back to the coast, where they began rebuilding for another invasion. In the west in 1888, the Mahdists invaded the province of Gojjam, north of the Blue Nile, and sacked the old capital city of Gondar near Lake Tana. The following year, while Yohannes focused on the Italian buildup eastward, the Mahdists again attacked. Yohannes rushed to meet the invasion, engaging the Mahdist army at Matemma (Qallabat) near the Atbara River on March 9, 1889. In the battle Yohannes was mortally wounded and died the next day. The Ethiopian army, initially victorious, withdrew after the death of the emperor. In the following days, the Mahdists captured the emperor's corpse, severed the head, and sent it to Omdurman to be displayed. Yohannes was soon succeeded by his rival Menelik, the king of Shewa.

**See also:** [Ethiopia \(Abyssinia\)](#); [Menelik II](#); [Muhammad Ahmad, the Mahdi](#).

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**YUSUF WAHBI BEY (1897–1982)** Yusuf (Youssef) Wahbi was a major film actor and director in a period the Egyptians called their “Golden Age” of film. Born to an aristocratic family, his father held the title of *Pasha* (*Basha* in Arabic), a Turkish title granted to the highest social rank. His father wanted him to become an engineer like himself, but the young Yusuf had a strong passion for acting and a strong will. He ran away from home and joined the circus despite his father's anger.

The young Yusuf left Egypt for Italy, where he changed his name to Ramses and was able to pursue serious studies in theater and drama. He did not return to Egypt until he heard that his father had died; he was able to collect his one-fourth of the inheritance, which amounted to a huge sum at the time—10,000 Egyptian pounds in gold (Darwish 1998, p. 23). He decided that Egyptian cinema and theater were dominated with “low-brow” farce in the “dancing whiskers of Naguib al-Rihani's Kishkish Bey and the jiggling eye brows of ‘Ali



Kassar” (Darwish 1998, p. 23). He formed his own theater group called the “Ramses Troupe” and became the self-styled “Messenger of Divine Mercy for the Salvation of Acting Opinion.” With his extreme self-confidence and the support of his troupe, he imposed himself onto the scene.

Wahbi proposed to play the role of the Prophet Muhammad in a film, but al-Azhar objected and he had to back down. His next project launched talking movies in Egypt with the film *Awlad al-Zawwat* (*Children of the Aristocracy*) in 1932. This film launched the Golden Age of Egyptian cinema, and the film was a financial success. His next venture, *al-Difa‘* (*The Defense*) in 1935 was written by him and codirected with Niyazi Mustafa. In 1937, he wrote, directed, and acted in the film *al-Majd al-Khulud* (*Eternal Glory*). All three films were highly successful and furthered his confidence.

In the early 1940s, Wahbi collaborated with Jewish director Togo Mizrahi on two films, both released in 1941: *Layla Bint al-Rif* (*Layla the Country Girl*) and *Layla Bint al-Madaris* (*Layla the Schoolgirl*) he starred with Jewish singing star Layla Murad. He again starred with a singer, the much younger Asmahan, in the film *Gharam wa Intiqam* (*Love and Revenge*). He also directed the film. Because the film included a *qasidah* (long epic poem) that praised the royal family, King Faruq issued a decree granting Yusuf Wahbi the title *Bey*. In 1949, he played himself in the Layla Murad film *Ghazal al-Binat* (*Flirtation of Girls*).

For most of the rest of his life he starred in only a few films but did develop the Ramses City film studio. He received honors from the al-Nasir’s government—the National Appreciation Prize—and later received an honorary doctorate. His last role was as an Egyptian nationalist Jew, the first such role in Egyptian cinema since the 1948 war with Israel, in the 1979 film *al-Iskandariyyah ... leh?* (*Alexandria ... Why?*). Yusuf Wahib Bey died in 1982 from complications of a broken hip.

**See also:** [King Faruq](#); [Umm Kulthum](#).

*John A. Shoup* **Further Reading** Darwish, Mustafa. 1998. *Dream Makers on the Nile: A Portrait of Egyptian Cinema*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

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**Part III**  
**Primary Documents**

# Document 1: Hymn to Nut, the Sky-Goddess, and Hymn to Ra, the Sun-God

*This encyclopedia includes several examples of literary and religious works from ancient Egypt. The religious texts come from the Book of the Dead, which developed over time to help the soul of the deceased make the perilous journey to the afterlife. It first appeared on the walls of tombs and is called The Pyramid Texts. They first appeared on the walls of the tomb chamber of Pharaoh Unas or Wanis (2375–2345 BCE), the last pharaoh of the Fifth Dynasty. The Pyramid Texts are found in the tombs of other Old Kingdom (2686–2181 BCE) pyramids. The texts are a series of charms and spells that ward off the evil forces along the way to the afterlife and help the soul correctly answer the questions asked by the gods. Originally, these charms and spells were only for the pharaohs, but as a result of the First Intermediate Period (2181–2055 BCE), several practices that had been reserved for the pharaoh were generalized to the aristocracy that took control in many of the nomes or provinces.*

*Several selections are included here from The Pyramid Texts—the “Hymns to the Sky Goddess and the Sun God” (translated by E. A. Wallis Budge). From The Book of the Dead come the chapters “Bringing a Heart to Osiris” and chapters of “Preserving the Heart” (translated by E. E Wallis Budge and published by Epiphanius Wilson).*

*As examples of the hymns in The Pyramid Texts, this encyclopedia includes the following samples. The first is a hymn to Nut, the Sky goddess; the second is a hymn to Rā, the Sun god. These translations reflect the wordy nature of Victorian and Edwardian English and the use of the types of personal address found in the King James version of the Bible.*

## Hymn to Nut, the Sky-Goddess

[O] Nut, thou hast extended thyself over thy son the Osiris Pepi,  
Thou hast snatched him out of the hand of Set; join him to thyself, Nut.  
Thou comest, snatch thy son; behold, thou comest, form this great one [like]  
unto thyself.  
[O] Nut, cast thyself upon thy son the Osiris Pepi.

[O] Nut, cast thyself upon thy son the Osiris Pepi.  
 Form thou him, O Great Fashioner; this great one is among thy children.  
 Form thou him, O Great Fashioner; this great one is among thy children.  
 Keb [was to] Nut. Thou didst become a spirit.  
 Thou wast a mighty goddess in the womb of thy mother Tefnut when thou wast  
 not born.  
 Form thou Pepi with life and well-being; he shall not die.  
 Strong was thy heart,  
 Thou didst leap in the womb of thy mother in thy name of "Nut."  
 [O] perfect daughter, mighty one in thy mother, who art crowned like a king of  
 the North,  
 Make this Pepi a spirit-soul in thee, let him not die.  
 [19][O] Great Lady, who didst come into being in the sky, who art mighty.  
 Who dost make happy, and dost fill every place (or being), with thy beauty,  
 The whole earth is under thee, thou hast taken possession of it.  
 Thou hast encompassed the earth, everything is in thy two hands,  
 Grant thou that this Pepi may be in thee like an imperishable star.  
 Thou hast associated with Keb in thy name of "Pet" (*i.e.* Sky).  
 Thou hast united the earth in every place.  
 [O] mistress over the earth, thou art above thy father Shu, thou hast the mastery  
 over him.  
 He hath loved thee so much that he setteth himself under thee in everything.  
 Thou hast taken possession of every god for thyself with his boat (?).  
 Thou hast made them shine like lamps,  
 Assuredly they shall not cease from thee like the stars.  
 Let not this Pepi depart from thee in thy name of "Hert" (ll. 61–64).

**Source:** Budge, E. A. Wallis. 1914. *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp.  
 18–19. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Limited. Available online at  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15932/15932-h/15932-h.htm>.

### Hymn to Rā, the Sun god

Hail to thee, Tem! Hail to thee, Kheprer, who created himself.  
 Thou art the High, in this thy name of "Height."  
 Thou camest into being in this thy name of "Kheprer."  
 Hail to thee, Eye of Horus,<sup>[1]</sup> which he furnisheth with his hands completely.  
 He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the West;  
 He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the East;

He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the South;  
He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those of the North;  
He permitteth not thee to be obedient to those who are in the earth;  
[For] thou art obedient to Horus.  
He it is who hath furnished thee, he it is who hath builded thee, he it is who hath  
made thee to be dwelt in.  
Thou doest for him whatsoever he saith unto thee, in every place whither he  
goeth.  
Thou liftest up to him the waterfowl that are in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him the waterfowl that are about to be in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him every tree that is in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him every tree that is about to be in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him the cakes and ale that are in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him the cakes and ale that are about to be in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him the gifts that are in thee.  
[20]Thou liftest up to him the gifts that are about to be in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him everything that is in thee.  
Thou liftest up to him everything that is about to be in thee.  
Thou takest them to him in every place wherein it pleaseth him to be.  
The doors upon thee stand fast [shut] like the god Anmutef,[2]  
They open not to those who are in the West;  
They open not to those who are in the East;  
They open not to those who are in the North;  
They open not to those who are in the South;  
They open not to those who are in the middle of the earth;  
But they open to Horus.

**Source:** Budge, E. A. Wallis. 1914. *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 19–20. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Limited. Available online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15932/15932-h/15932-h.htm>.

## **Document 2: *The Book of the Dead***

*The second stage in the development of The Book of the Dead was The Coffin Texts. The texts get their name from the fact that they were written on the coffins of mummies. They were a result of the spread of the practice of providing the*

*soul of the dead pharaoh with the needed charms to the aristocracy during the First Intermediate Period. The texts appeared during the Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BCE). The Coffin Texts included a map of the afterlife in addition to charms and spells. For those who were not royal, it promised that those who made it safely through the trial would become stars in the heavens and live with the god Thoth. If they did not make it, the serpent Apophis would devour them after demons cut them to pieces.*

*After the Second Intermediate Period (1650–1550 BCE) and a further democratization of the religion, a third stage in the development of funeral rites occurred in the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE). This was what archaeologists called The Book of the Dead and what Egyptians called The Formulae for Going Forth by Day or sometimes The Night of Counting the Years. The number of spells and charms the soul was to memorize grew larger and larger; in the end, some 165 chapters were identified by archaeologists. The most important chapter was the trial before the gods in which the heart was measured with a feather. If the heart was heavier than the feather, the soul was devoured by a monster, Amemit, who sat next to the scale. The soul was given spells to use so that his heart and tongue would not betray him and allow him to pass the judgment of Osiris. The mummy had charms placed in the wrappings, spells and charms were written on the coffin, short versions of the book were placed under the head, and whole texts were written on tomb walls or placed in the coffin with the mummy. All of this was to ensure the soul of the dead would be able to pass the trial.*

The Chapter of Giving a Heart to Osiris

[From the Papyrus of Ani (British Museum No. 10,470, sheet 15).]

THE CHAPTER OF GIVING A HEART TO OSIRIS ANI IN THE UNDERWORLD. He saith:

“May my heart (*ab*) be with me in the House of Hearts! May my heart (*hat*) be with me in the House of Hearts! May my heart be with me, and may it rest there, [or] I shall not eat of the cakes of Osiris on the eastern side of the Lake of Flowers, neither shall I have a boat wherein to go down the Nile, nor another wherein to go up, nor shall I be able to sail down the Nile with thee. May my mouth [be given] to me that I may speak therewith, and my two legs to walk therewith, and my two hands and arms to overthrow my foe. May the doors of heaven be opened unto me; may Seb, the Prince of the gods, open wide his two jaws unto me; may he open my two eyes which are blindfolded; may he cause

me to stretch apart my two legs which are bound together; and may Anpu (Anubis) make my thighs firm so that I may stand upon them. May the goddess Sekhet make me to rise so that I may ascend unto heaven, and may that be done which I command in the House of the *foreign* (double) of Ptah (i.e., Memphis). I understand with my heart. I have gained the mastery over my heart, I have gained the mastery over my two hands, I have gained the mastery over my legs, I have gained the power to do whatsoever my *ka* (double) pleaseth. My soul shall not be fettered to my body at the gates of the underworld; but I shall enter in peace and I shall come forth in peace.”

#### The Chapter of Preserving The Heart

[From the Papyrus of Ani (British Museum No. 10,470, sheets 15 and 16).]

THE CHAPTER OF NOT LETTING THE HEART (HATI) OF A MAN BE TAKEN FROM HIM IN THE UNDERWORLD. Saith Osiris Ani:

“Hail, ye who carry away hearts! [Hail,] ye who steal [hearts, and who make the heart of a man to go through its transformations according to his deeds, let not what he hath done harm him before you]. Homage to you, O ye lords of eternity, ye possessors of everlastingness, take ye not this heart of Osiris Ani into your grasp, this heart of Osiris, and cause ye not words of evil to spring up against it; because this is the heart of Osiris Ani, triumphant, and it belongeth unto him of many names (i.e., Thoth), the mighty one whose words are his limbs, and who sendeth forth his heart to dwell in his body. The heart of Osiris Ani is triumphant, it is made new before the gods, he hath gained power over it, he hath not been spoken to [according to] what he hath done. He hath gotten power over his own members. His heart obeyeth him, he is the lord thereof, it is in his body, and it shall never fall away therefrom. I, Osiris, the scribe Ani, victorious in peace, and triumphant in the beautiful Amenta and on the mountain of eternity, bid thee to be obedient unto me in the underworld.”

#### The Chapter of Preserving the Heart

[From the Papyrus of Nu (British Museum No. 10,477, sheet 5).]

THE CHAPTER OF NOT LETTING THE HEART OF THE OVERSEER OF THE PALACE, THE CHANCELLOR-IN-CHIEF, NU, TRIUMPHANT, BE CARRIED AWAY FROM HIM IN THE UNDERWORLD. He saith:

“Hail, thou Lion-god! I am the Flower Bush (*Unb*). That which is an abomination unto me is the divine block. Let not this my heart (*hāti*) be carried away from me by the fighting gods in Annu. Hail, thou who dost wind bandages round Osiris and who hast seen Set! Hail, thou who returnest after smiting and destroying him before the mighty ones! This my heart (*ab*) [sitteth] and weepeth for itself before Osiris; it hath made supplication for me. I have given unto him and I have decreed unto him the thoughts of the heart in the House of the god Usekh-hra, and I have brought to him sand (*sic*) at the entry to Khemennu (Hermopolis Magna). Let not this my heart (*hāti*) be carried away from me! I make thee to dwell(?) upon this throne, O thou who joinest together hearts (*hātu*) [in Sekhet-hetep (with) years] of strength against all things that are an abomination unto thee, and to carry off food from among the things which belong unto thee, and are in thy grasp by reason of thy twofold strength. And this my heart (*hāti*) is devoted to the decrees of the god Tem who leadeth me into the dens of Suti, but let not this my heart which hath done its desire before the sovereign princes who are in the underworld be given unto him. When they find the leg and the swathings they bury them.”

The Chapter of Preserving the Heart

[From the Papyrus of Amen-hetep (Naville, “Todtenbuch,” Bd. I. Bl. 40).]

THE CHAPTER OF NOT ALLOWING THE HEART OF AMEN-HETEP, TRIUMPHANT, TO BE CARRIED AWAY DEAD IN THE UNDERWORLD. The deceased saith:

“My heart is with me, and it shall never come to pass that it shall be carried away. I am the lord of hearts, the slayer of the heart. I live in right and truth (*Maāt*) and I have my being therein. I am Horus, the dweller in hearts, who is within the dweller in the body. I live in my word, and my heart hath being. Let not my heart be taken away from me, let it not be wounded, and may neither wounds nor gashes be dealt upon me because it hath been taken away from me. Let me have my being in the body of [my] father Seb, [and in the body of my] mother Nut. I have not done that which is held in abomination by the gods; let me not suffer defeat there, [but let me be] triumphant.”

**Source:** Wilson, Epiphanius A. M. 1901. *Egyptian Literature: Comprising Egyptian Tales, Hymns, Litanies, Invocations, The Book of the Dead and Cuneiform Writings*, pp. 20–23. New York: The CoOperative Publication Society, The Colonial Press, 1901. Available online at



## Document 3: *The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor*

*These three works of Ancient Egyptian literature include three of the best known pieces of ancient literature: The Shipwrecked Sailor (Traveler), The Tale (Story) of Sanehat (Sinuhe), and The Peasant and the Workman. These stories are from the Middle Kingdom when there was a massive outpouring of literature in Egypt. Although the Old Kingdom is believed to have produced the best representative art (tomb drawings, carvings, and statues), the Middle Kingdom produced an equal high level of quality in literature. These stories remain relevant to readers today and were adopted in later eras into both popular and high literary forms. The Tale of The Shipwrecked Sailor (Traveler) reoccurs in the Alf Laylah wa Laylah or The Thousand and One Nights.*

*The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor was published in numerous editions, including a popular children's book. It also exists in a "modern" form in several of the tales of Sinbad the Sailor. The story begins with the safe arrival in Aswan of a military and trading expedition that traveled up the Nile to Nubia. One of those who meets the returning crew tells them a story of another expedition's fate that was shared with the pharaoh.*

The shipwrecked traveller ... narrates his experiences in the following words: I will now speak and give thee a description of the things that [once] happened to me myself [when] I was journeying to the copper mines of the king. I went down into the sea<sup>[1]</sup> (Translator's note: The sea was the Red Sea, and the narrator must have been on his way to Wadi Magharah or Sarabit al-Khadim in the Peninsula of Sinai.) in a ship that was one hundred and fifty cubits (225 feet) in length, and forty cubits (60 feet) in breadth, and it was manned by one hundred and fifty sailors who were chosen from among the best sailors of Egypt. They had looked upon the sky, they had looked upon the land, and their hearts were more understanding than the hearts of lions. Now although they were able to say beforehand when a tempest was coming, and could tell when a squall was going to rise before it broke upon them, a storm actually overtook us when we were still on the sea. Before we could make the land the wind blew with redoubled violence, and it drove before it upon us a wave that was eight cubits

(12 feet) [high]. A plank was driven towards me by it, and I seized it; and as for the ship, those who were therein perished, and not one of them escaped.

Then a wave of the sea bore me along and cast me up upon an island, and I passed three days there by myself.... I laid me down and slept in a hollow in a thicket, and I hugged the shade. And ... I walked about, so that I might find out what to put in my mouth, and I found there figs and grapes, and all kinds of fine large berries; and there were there gourds, and melons, and pumpkins as large as barrels (?), and there were also there fish and waterfowl. There was no [food] of any sort or kind that did not grow in this island. And when I had eaten all I could eat, I laid the remainder of the food upon the ground, for it was too much for me [to carry] in my arms. I then dug a hole in the ground and made a fire, and I prepared pieces of wood and a burnt-offering for the gods.

And I heard a sound [as of] thunder, which I thought to be [caused by] a wave of the sea, and the trees rocked and the earth quaked, and I covered my face. And I found [that the sound was caused by] a serpent that was coming towards me. It was thirty cubits (45 feet) in length, and its beard was more than two cubits in length, and its body was covered with [scales of] gold, and the two ridges over its eyes were of pure lapis-lazuli; and it coiled its whole length up before me. And it opened its mouth to me, now I was lying flat on my stomach in front of it, and it said unto me, "Who hath brought thee hither? Who hath brought thee hither, O miserable one? Who hath brought thee hither? If thou dost not immediately declare unto me who hath brought thee to this island, I will make thee to know what it is to be burnt with fire, and thou wilt become a thing that is invisible. Thou speakest to me, but I cannot hear what thou sayest; I am before thee, dost thou not know me?" Then the serpent took me in its mouth, and carried me off to the place where it was wont to rest, and it set me down there, having done me no harm whatsoever; I was sound and whole, and it had not carried away any portion of my body. And it opened its mouth to me whilst I was lying flat on my stomach, and it said unto me, "Who hath brought thee thither? Who hath brought thee hither, O miserable one? Who hath brought thee to this island of the sea, the two sides of which are in the waves?"

Then I made answer to the serpent, my two hands being folded humbly before it, and I said unto it, "I am one who was travelling to the mines on a mission of the king in a ship.... They were able to say beforehand when a tempest was coming, and to tell when a squall was about to rise before it broke. The heart of every man among them was wiser than that of his neighbour, and the arm of each was stronger than that of his neighbour; there was not one weak man

among them. Nevertheless it blew a gale of wind whilst we were still on the sea and before we could make the land. A gale rose, which continued to increase in violence, and with it there came upon [us] a wave eight cubits [high]. A plank of wood was driven towards me by this wave, and I seized it; and as for the ship, those who were therein perished and not one of them escaped alive [except] myself. And now behold me by thy side! It was a wave of the sea that brought me to this island.”

And the serpent said unto me, “Have no fear, have no fear, O little one, and let not thy face be sad, now that thou hast arrived at the place where I am. Verily, God hath spared thy life, and thou hast been brought to this island where there is food..... Verily, thou shalt pass month after month on this island, until thou hast come to the end of four months, and then a ship shall come, and there shall be therein sailors who are acquaintances of thine, and thou shalt go with them to thy country, and thou shalt die in thy native town.” [And the serpent continued,].... I will now describe unto thee some of the things that have happened unto me on this island. I used to live here with my brethren, and with my children who dwelt among them; now my children and my brethren together numbered seventy-five. I do not make mention of a little maiden who had been brought to me by fate. And a star fell [from heaven], and these (i.e., his children, and his brethren, and the maiden) came into the fire which fell with it. I myself was not with those who were burnt in the fire, and I was not in their midst, but I [well-nigh] died [of grief] for them. And I found a place wherein I buried them all together. Now, if thou art strong, and thy heart flourisheth, thou shalt fill both thy arms (i.e., embrace) with thy children, and thou shalt kiss thy wife, and thou shalt see thine own house, which is the most beautiful thing of all, and thou shalt reach thy country, and thou shalt live therein again together with thy brethren, and dwell therein.”

Then I cast myself down flat upon my stomach, and I pressed the ground before the serpent with my forehead, saying, “I will describe thy power to the King, and I will make him to understand thy greatness. I will cause to be brought unto thee the unguent and spices called *aba*, and *hekenu*, and *inteneb*, and *khasait*, and the incense that is offered up in the temples, whereby every god is propitiated.... I will slaughter bulls for thee, and will offer them up as burnt-offerings, and I will pluck feathered fowl in thine [honour]. And I will cause to come to thee boats laden with all the most costly products of the land of Egypt, even according to what is done for a god who is beloved by men and women in a land far away, whom they know not.” Then the serpent smiled at me, and the

things which I had said to it were regarded by it in its heart as nonsense, for it said unto me, "Thou hast not a very great store of myrrh [in Egypt], and all that thou hast is incense. Behold, I am the Prince of Punt, and the myrrh which is therein belongeth to me. And as for the *heken* which thou hast said thou wilt cause to be brought to me, is it not one of the chief [products] of this island? And behold, it shall come to pass that when thou hast once departed from this place, thou shalt never more see this island, for it shall disappear into the waves."

And in due course, even as the serpent had predicted, a ship arrived, and I climbed up to the top of a high tree, and I recognised those who were in it. Then I went to announce the matter to the serpent, but I found that it had knowledge thereof already. And the serpent said unto me, "A safe [journey], a safe [journey], O little one, to thy house. Thou shalt see thy children [again]. I beseech thee that my name may be held in fair repute in thy city, for verily this is the thing which I desire of thee." Then I threw myself flat upon my stomach, and my two hands were folded humbly before the serpent. And the serpent gave me a [ship-] load of things, namely, myrrh, *heken*, *inteneb*, *khasait*, *thsheps*, and *shaas* spices, eye-paint (antimony), skins of panthers, great balls of incense, tusks of elephants, greyhounds, apes, monkeys, and beautiful and costly products of all sorts and kinds. And when I had loaded these things into the ship, and had thrown myself flat upon my stomach in order to give thanks unto it for the same, it spake unto me, saying, "Verily thou shalt travel to [thy] country in two months, and thou shalt fill both thy arms with thy children, and thou shalt renew thy youth in thy coffin.".... Then we set sail, and we journeyed on and returned to the country of the King, and we arrived there at the end of two months, according to all that the serpent had said. And I entered into the presence of the King, and I took with me for him the offerings which I had brought out of the island. And the King praised me and thanked me in the presence of the nobles of all his country, and he appointed me to be one of his bodyguard, and I received my wages along with those who were his [regular] servants.

Cast thou thy glance then upon me [O Prince], now that I have set my feet on my native land once more, having seen and experienced what I have seen and experienced. Harken thou unto me, for verily it is a good thing to hearken unto men. And the Prince said unto me, "Make not thyself out to be perfect, my friend! Doth a man give water to a fowl at daybreak which he is going to kill during the day?"

Here endeth [The Story of the Shipwrecked Traveller], which hath been written from the beginning to the end thereof according to the text that hath been

found written in an [ancient] book. It hath been written (i.e. copied) by Ameni-Amen-āa, a scribe with skilful fingers. Life, strength, and health be to him!

**Source:** Budge, Wallis E. A. 1914. *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 208–213. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited. Available online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15932/15932-h/15932-h.htm>.

## Document 4: *The Story of Sinuhe*

The Story of Sinuhe or Sanehat is an autobiographical account of the turmoil in Egypt when Pharaoh Amenemhat I (ruled 1991–1962 BCE) was assassinated by elements from his royal guard while the Prince Senwosret (ruled 1971–1926 BCE) was on campaign against the Themehu, Berber tribes in the Libyan Desert. Fearing for his life and thinking Senwosret would suffer the same fate as his father, Sinuhe, a close servant of Senwosret, fled Egypt and ended up in northern Palestine. The tale offers a glimpse into how Egyptians viewed the world outside of the Nile River valley as well as aspects of ancient Egyptian religion. The story ends with Sinuhe's return to "civilization" and the forgiveness of the pharaoh. It served as the basis for the novel *The Egyptian* by Finnish author Mika Waltari published in 1945. The humanist nature of the tale appealed to the post-World War II readership, and the novel was a best seller. It was turned into an Academy Award-winning film in 1954 also called *The Egyptian*, but it took on a proto-Christian message by setting the story in the time of Pharaoh Akhenaten (1351–1334 BCE) of the 18th Dynasty and not in the 12th Dynasty when the historic figure of Sinuhe actually lived. The Hollywood film linked the religious reforms of Akhenaten to an early form of Christianity by showing the similarities between the ancient Egyptian symbol of life called an ankh and the Christian cross as well as comparing the pharaoh's attempt to worship a single god (the sun god Aten) with the Judeo-Christian God. Egyptian author Najib Mahfuz also used it for the basis of his novel 'Awdat Sinuhe (The Return of Sinuhe) published in 1941. It was translated into English in 2003.

... On the seventh day of the third month of the season Akhet, in the thirtieth year [of his reign], the god drew nigh to his horizon, and the King of the South, the King of the North, Sehetepabrā,<sup>[1]</sup> (i.e., Amenemhāt I). ascended into heaven, and was invited to the Disk, and his divine members mingled with those of him that made him. The King's House was in silence, hearts were bowed

down in sorrow, the two Great Gates were shut fast, the officials sat motionless, and the people mourned.

Now behold [before his death] His Majesty had despatched an army to the Land of the Themehu, under the command of his eldest son, the beautiful god Usertsen (Senwosret). And he went and raided the desert lands in the south, and captured slaves from the Thehenu (Libyans), and he was at that moment returning and bringing back Libyan slaves and innumerable beasts of every kind. And the high officers of the Palace sent messengers into the western country to inform the King's son concerning what had taken place in the royal abode. And the messengers found him on the road, and they came to him by night and asked him if it was not the proper time for him to hasten his return, and to set out with his bodyguard without letting his army in general know of his departure. They also told him that a message had been sent to the princes who were in command of the soldiers in his train not to proclaim [the matter of the King's death] to any one else.

Sanehat/Sinhue continues: When I heard his voice speaking I rose up and fled. My heart was cleft in twain, my arms dropped by my side, and trembling seized all my limbs. I ran about distractedly, hither and thither, seeking a hiding-place. I went into the thickets in order to find a place wherein I could travel without being seen. I made my way upstream, and I decided not to appear in the Palace, for I did not know but that deeds of violence were taking place there.... Then I came to the Lake (or Island) of Seneferu, and I passed the whole day there on the edge of the plain. On the following morning I continued my journey, and a man rose up immediately in front of me on the road, and he cried for mercy; he was afraid of me. When the night fell I walked into the village of Nekau, and I crossed the river.... And I travelled eastwards of the district of Aku, by the pass of the goddess Herit, the Lady of the Red Mountain. Then I allowed my feet to take the road downstream, and I travelled on to Anebuheq, the fortress that had been built to drive back the Satiu (nomad marauders), and to hold in check the tribes that roamed the desert. I crouched down in the scrub during the day to avoid being seen by the watchmen on the top of the fortress. I set out again on the march, when the night fell, and when daylight fell on the earth I arrived at Peten, and I rested myself by the Lake of Kamur. Then thirst came upon me and overwhelmed me.... I said, "This indeed is the taste of death." But I took courage, and collected my members (i.e., myself), for I heard the sounds that are made by flocks and herds. Then the Satiu of the desert saw me, and the master of the caravan who had been in Egypt recognised me. And he

rose up and gave me some water, and he warmed milk [for me], and I travelled with the men of his caravan, and thus I passed through one country after the other [in safety]. I avoided the land of Sunu and I journeyed to the land of Qetem, where I stayed for a year and a half.

And Āmmuiansha, the Shēkh of Upper Thennu, took me aside and said unto me, “Thou wilt be happy with me, for thou wilt hear the language of Egypt.” Now he said this because he knew what manner of man I was, for he had heard the people of Egypt who were there with him bear testimony concerning my character. And he said unto me, “Why and wherefore hast thou come hither? Is it because the departure of King Sehetepabrā from the Palace to the horizon hath taken place, and thou didst not know what would be the result of it?” Then I spake unto him with words of deceit, saying, “I was among the soldiers who had gone to the land of Themeh. My heart cried out, my courage failed me utterly, it made me follow the ways over which I fled. I hesitated, but felt no regret. I did not hearken unto any evil counsel, and my name was not heard on the mouth of the herald. How I came to be brought into this country I know not; it was, perhaps, by the Providence of God.”

The Bedouin leader informs Sinuhe that his friend and master Senwosret was able to defeat those who had plotted against Amenemhat and was now the ruling pharaoh.

Then the Shēkh of Upper Thennu said unto me, “Assuredly Egypt is a happy country in that it knoweth his vigour. Verily, as long as thou tarriest with me I will do good unto thee.”

And he set me before his children, and he gave me his eldest daughter to wife, and he made me to choose for myself a very fine territory which belonged to him, and which lay on the border of a neighbouring country, and this beautiful region was called Aa. In it there are figs, and wine is more abundant than water. Honey is plentiful, oil existeth in large quantities, and fruits of every kind are on the trees thereof. Wheat, barley, herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep and goats are there in untold numbers. And the Shēkh showed me very great favour, and his affection for me was so great that he made me Shēkh of one of the best tribes in his country. Bread-cakes were made for me each day, and each day wine was brought to me with roasted flesh and wild fowl, and the wild creatures of the plain that were caught were laid before me, in addition to the game which my hunting dogs brought in. Food of all kinds was made for me, and milk was prepared for me in various ways. I passed many years in this manner, and my children grew up into fine strong men, and each one of them ruled his tribe.

Every ambassador on his journey to and from Egypt visited me. I was kind to people of every class. I gave water to the thirsty man. I suppressed the highway robber. I directed the operations of the bowmen of the desert, who marched long distances to suppress the hostile Shēkhs, and to reduce their power, for the Shēkh of Thennu had appointed me General of his soldiers many years before this. Every country against which I marched I terrified into submission. I seized the crops by the wells, I looted the flocks and herds, I carried away the people and their slaves who ate their bread, I slew the men there. Through my sword and bow, and through my well-organised campaigns, I was highly esteemed in the mind of the Shēkh, and he loved me, for he knew my bravery, and he set me before his children when he saw the bravery of my arms.

Then a certain mighty man of valour of Thennu came and reviled me in my tent; he was greatly renowned as a man of war, and he was unequalled in the whole country, which he had conquered. He challenged me to combat, being urged to fight by the men of his tribe, and he believed that he could conquer me, and he determined to take my flocks and herds as spoil....

Thus challenged, Sinuhe decided he must fight the man.... And I passed the night in stringing my bow, I made ready my arrows of war, I unsheathed my dagger, and I put all my weapons in order. At daybreak the tribes of the land of Thennu came, and the people who lived on both sides of it gathered themselves together, for they were greatly concerned about the combat, and they came and stood up round about me where I stood. Every heart burned for my success, and both men and women uttered cries (or exclamations), and every heart suffered anxiety on my behalf, saying, "Can there exist possibly any man who is a mightier fighter and more doughty as a man of war than he?" Then mine adversary grasped his shield, and his battle-axe, and his spears, and after he had hurled his weapons at me, and I had succeeded in avoiding his short spears, which arrived harmlessly one after the other, he became filled with fury, and making up his mind to attack me at close quarters he threw himself upon me. And I hurled my javelin at him, which remained fast in his neck, and he uttered a long cry and fell on his face, and I slew him with his own weapons. And as I stood upon his back I shouted the cry of victory, and every Āamu man (i.e., Asiatic) applauded me, and I gave thanks to Menthu;<sup>[1]</sup> (The War-god of Thebes) and the slaves of my opponent mourned for their lord. And the Shēkh Āmmuiansha took me in his arms and embraced me. I carried off his (i.e. the opponent's) property. I seized his cattle as spoil, and what he meditated doing to me I did unto him. I took possession of the contents of his tent, I stripped his



compound, I became rich, I increased my store of goods, and I added greatly to the number of my cattle....

But even with his victories and honors bestowed upon him by his father-in-law and other Bedouin, he longed for Egypt and “civilized” life. He began to dream of Egypt, the sweet waters of the Nile, and eventually word of Sinuhe reaches the Pharaoh....

Behold now, the Majesty of the King of Egypt, Kheperkarā, whose word is truth, having spoken concerning the various things that had happened to me, sent a messenger to me bearing royal gifts, such as he would send to the king of a foreign land, with the intention of making glad the heart of thy servant now [speaking], and the princes of his palace made me to hear their salutations. And here is a copy of the document, which was brought to thy servant [from the King] instructing him to return to Egypt....

Sinuhe includes the text of the message requesting his return and promising he will not be punished for leaving ...

When this royal letter reached me I was standing among the people of my tribe, and when it had been read to me I threw myself face downwards on the ground, and bowed until my head touched the dust, and I clasped the document reverently to my breast. Then [I rose up] and walked to and fro in my abode, rejoicing and saying, “How can these things possibly be done to thy servant who is now speaking, whose heart made him to fly into foreign lands [where dwell] peoples who stammer in their speech? Assuredly it is a good and gracious thought [of the King] to deliver me from death [here], for thy Ka (i.e., double) will make my body to end [its existence] in my native land.”

Here is a copy of the reply that was made by the servant of the Palace, Sanehat, to the above royal document:

... Sinuhe sends a lengthy response to the Pharaoh and included a copy of the text in the original manuscript. He leaves his Bedouin family and gladly returns to his native Egypt....

And I tarried one day in the country of Aa in order to transfer my possessions to my children. My eldest son attended to the affairs of the people of my settlement, and the men and women thereof (i.e., the slaves), and all my possessions were in his hand, and all my children, and all my cattle, and all my fruit trees, and all my palm plantations and groves. Then thy servant who is now speaking set out on his journey and travelled towards the South. When I arrived at Heruuatu, the captain of the frontier patrol sent a messenger to inform the Court of my arrival. His Majesty sent a courteous overseer of the servants of the

Palace, and following him came large boats laden with gifts from the King for the soldiers of the desert who had escorted me and guided me to the town of Heruuatu.... I continued my journey, the wind bore me along, food was prepared for me and drink made ready for me, and the best of apparel (?), until I arrived at Athettaui. (A fortified town a little to the south of Memphis.)

On the morning of the day following my arrival, five officials came to me, and they bore me to the Great House, and I bowed low until my forehead touched the ground before him. And the princes and princesses were standing waiting for me in the *umtet* chamber, and they advanced to meet me and to receive me, and the *smeru* officials conducted me into the hall, and led me to the privy chamber of the King, where I found His Majesty [seated] upon the Great Throne in the *umtet* chamber of silver-gold. I arrived there, I raised myself up after my prostrations, and I knew not that I was in his presence. Then this god (i.e., the King) spake unto me harshly, and I became like unto a man who is confounded in the darkness; my intelligence left me, my limbs quaked, my heart was no longer in my body, and I knew not whether I was dead or alive. Then His Majesty said unto one of his high officials, "Raise him, and let him speak unto me." And His Majesty said unto me, "Thou hast come then! Thou hast smitten foreign lands and thou hast travelled, but now weakness hath vanquished thee, thou hast become old, and the infirmities of thy body are many. The warriors of the desert shall not escort thee [to thy grave] ... wilt thou not speak and declare thy name?" And I was afraid to contradict him, and I answered him about these matters like a man who was stricken with fear. Thus did my Lord speak to me.

And I answered and said, "The matter was not of my doing, for, behold, it was done by the hand of God; bodily terror made me to flee according to what was ordained. But, behold, I am here in thy presence! ..." And the King dismissed the royal children, and His Majesty said unto the Queen, "Look now, this is Sanehat who cometh in the guise of an Asiatic, and who hath turned himself into a nomad warrior of the desert." And the Queen laughed a loud hearty laugh, and the royal children cried out with one voice before His Majesty, saying, "O Lord King, this man cannot really be Sanehat"; and His Majesty said, "It is indeed!"

Then the royal children brought their instruments of music,..., saying, "Thy hands perform beneficent acts, O King. The graces of the Lady of Heaven rest [upon thee]. The goddess Nubt giveth life to thy nostrils, and the Lady of the Stars joineth herself to thee, as thou sailest to the South wearing the Crown of the North, and to the North wearing the Crown of the South. Wisdom is

established in the mouth of Thy Majesty, and health is on thy brow.... For our sakes graciously give a boon to this traveller Sanehat, this desert warrior who was born in Tamera (Egypt). He fled through fear of thee, and he departed to a far country because of his terror of thee.” ... Then His Majesty said, “Let him fear not, and let him not utter a sound of fear. He shall be a *smer* official among the princes of the palace, he shall be a member of the company of the *shenit* officials. Get ye gone to the refectory of the palace, and see to it that rations are provided for him.”

Thereupon I came forth from the privy chamber of the King, and the royal children clasped my hands, and we passed on to the Great Door, and I was lodged in the house of one of the King’s sons, which was beautifully furnished. In it there was a bath, and it contained representations of the heavens and objects from the Treasury. And there [I found] apparel made of royal linen, and myrrh of the finest quality which was used by the King, and every chamber was in charge of officials who were favourites of the King, and every officer had his own appointed duties. And [there] the years were made to slide off my members. I cut and combed my hair, I cast from me the dirt of a foreign land, together with the apparel of the nomads who live in the desert. I arrayed myself in apparel made of fine linen, I anointed my body with costly ointments, I slept upon a bedstead [instead of on the ground], I left the sand to those who dwelt on it, and the crude oil of wood wherewith they anoint themselves. I was allotted the house of a nobleman who had the title of *smer*, and many workmen laboured upon it, and its garden and its groves of trees were replanted with plants and trees. Rations were brought to me from the palace three or four times each day, in additions to the gifts which the royal children gave me unceasingly. And the site of a stone pyramid among the pyramids was marked out for me. The surveyor-in-chief to His Majesty chose the site for it, the director of the funerary designers drafted the designs and inscriptions which were to be cut upon it, the chief of the masons of the necropolis cut the inscriptions, and the clerk of the works in the necropolis went about the country collecting the necessary funerary furniture. I made the building to flourish, and provided everything that was necessary for its upkeep. I acquired land round about it. I made a lake for the performance of funerary ceremonies, and the land about it contained gardens, and groves of trees, and I provided a place where the people on the estate might dwell similar to that which is provided for a *smeru* nobleman of the first rank. My statue, which was made for me by His Majesty, was plated with gold, and the tunic thereof was of silver-gold. Not for any ordinary person did he do such things.

**Source:** Budge, Wallis E. A. 1914. *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 155–169. London: J. M. Dent & Sons. Available online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15932/15932-h/15932-h.htm>.

## **Document 5: *The Peasant and the Workman***

*The story of The Peasant and the Workman or The Story of the Educated Peasant Khuenanpu was made into a movie by Egyptian director Shadi 'Abd al-Salam as al-Falah al-Fasih (The Eloquent Peasant) (1970). This stories emphasis on the morality of the brave peasant in the face of corruption is part of its continued appeal. The Egyptian director Shadi 'Abd al-Salam used the story to point out the corruption in the late Nasser period. The film was initially ignored but has subsequently become one of the classics of Egyptian film. The strong moral character and the eloquence of his complaints are directly attributed to the average Egyptian man and woman. The Pharaoh (Nasser) remains a distant figure, but an enforcer of true justice against the abuses of lower level officials. Nonetheless, the persistence of the peasant finally brings him justice of the Pharaoh who merely tells his steward Rensi to judge himself and all of the stolen goods are returned. The thief, the employee of Rensi, is punished.*

Once upon a time there lived a man whose name was Khuenanpu, a peasant of Sekhet-hemat,[1] (A district to the west of Cairo now known as Wādi an-Natrūn) and he had a wife whose name was Nefert. This peasant said to this wife of his, “Behold, I am going down into Egypt in order to bring back food for my children. Go thou and measure up the grain which remaineth in the granary, [and see how many] measures [there are].” Then she measured it, and there were eight measures. Then this peasant said unto this wife of his, “Behold, two measures of grain shall be for the support of thyself and thy children, but of the other six thou shalt make bread and beer whereon I am to live during the days on which I shall be travelling.” And this peasant went down into Egypt, having laden his asses with *aaa* plants, and *retmet* plants, and soda and salt, and wood of the district of ..., and *aunt* wood of the Land of Oxen,[2] (*The Oasis of Farāfra*) and skins of panthers and wolves, and *neshau* plants, and *anu* stones, and *tenem* plants, and *kheperur* plants, and *sahut*, and *saksut* seeds (?), and *masut* plants, and *sent* and *abu* stones, and *absa* and *anba* plants, and doves and *naru* and *ukes* birds, and *tebu*, *uben*, and *tebsu* plants, and *kenkent* seeds, and the

plant “hair of the earth,” and *anset* seeds, and all kinds of beautiful products of the land of Sekhet-hemat. And when this peasant had marched to the south, to Hensu,[3] (Herakleopolis of the Greeks, the modern Ahnās al-Madīnah). and had arrived at the region of Perfefa, to the north of Metnat, he found a man standing on the river bank whose name was Tehutinekht, who was the son of a man whose name was Asri; both father and son were serfs of Rensi, the son of Meru the steward. When this man Tehutinekht saw the asses of this peasant, of which his heart approved greatly, he said, “Would that I had any kind of god with me to help me to seize for myself the goods of this peasant!” Now the house of this Tehutinekht stood upon the upper edge of a sloping path along the river bank, which was narrow and not wide. It was about as wide as a sheet of linen cloth, and upon one side of it was the water of the stream, and on the other was a growing crop. Then this Tehutinekht said unto his slave, “Run and bring me a sheet of linen out of my house”; and it was brought to him immediately. Then he shook out the sheet of linen over the narrow sloping path in such a way that its upper edge touched the water, and the fringed edge the growing crop. And when this peasant was going along the public path, this Tehutinekht said unto him, “Be careful, peasant, wouldst thou walk upon my clothes?” And this peasant said, “I will do as thou pleasest; my way is good.” And when he turned to the upper part of the path, this Tehutinekht said, “Is my corn to serve as a road for thee, O peasant?” Then this peasant said, “My way is good. The river-bank is steep, and the road is covered up with thy corn, and thou hast blocked up the path with thy linen garment. Dost thou really intend not to let us pass? Hath it come to pass that he dareth to say such a thing?” [At that moment] one of the asses bit off a large mouthful of the growing corn, and this Tehutinekht said, “Behold, thy ass is eating my corn! Behold, he shall come and tread it out.” Then this peasant said, “My way is good. Because one side of the road was made impassable [by thee], I led my ass to the other side (?), and now thou hast seized my ass because he bit off a large mouthful of the growing corn. However, I know the master of this estate, which belongeth to Rensi, the son of Meru. There is no doubt that he hath driven every robber out of the whole country, and shall I be robbed on his estate?” And this Tehutinekht said, “Is not this an illustration of the proverb which the people use, ‘The name of the poor man is only mentioned because of his master?’ It is I who speak to thee, but it is the steward [Rensi, the son of Meru] of whom thou art thinking.” Then Tehutinekht seized a cudgel of green tamarisk wood, and beat cruelly with it every part of the peasant’s body, and took his asses from him and carried them off into his compound. And this

peasant wept and uttered loud shrieks of pain because of what was done to him. And this Tehutinekht said, "Howl not so loudly, peasant, or verily [thou shalt depart] to the domain of the Lord of Silence."<sup>[4]</sup> (Osiris. This was a threat to kill the peasant). Then this peasant said, "Thou hast beaten me, and robbed me of my possessions, and now thou wishest to steal even the very complaint that cometh out of my mouth! Lord of Silence indeed! Give me back my goods. Do not make me to utter complaints about thy fearsome character."

And this peasant spent ten whole days in making entreaties to this Tehutinekht [for the restoration of his goods], but Tehutinekht paid no attention to them whatsoever. At the end of this time this peasant set out on a journey to the south, to the city of Hensu, in order to lay his complaint before Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, and he found him just as he was coming forth from the door in the courtyard of his house which opened on the river bank, to embark in his official boat on the river. And this peasant said, "I earnestly wish that it may happen that I may make glad thy heart with the words which I am going to say! Peradventure thou wilt allow some one to call thy confidential servant to me, in order that I may send him back to thee thoroughly well informed as to my business." Then Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, caused his confidential servant to go to this peasant, who sent him back to him thoroughly well informed as to his business. And Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, made inquiries about this Tehutinekht from the officials who were immediately connected with him, and they said unto him, "Lord, the matter is indeed only one that concerneth one of the peasants of Tehutinekht who went [to do business] with another man near him instead of with him. And, as a matter of fact, [officials like Tehutinekht] always treat their peasants in this manner whensoever they go to do business with other people instead of with them. Wouldst thou trouble thyself to inflict punishment upon Tehutinekht for the sake of a little soda and a little salt? [It is unthinkable.] Just let Tehutinekht be ordered to restore the soda and the salt and he will do so [immediately]." And Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, held his peace; he made no answer to the words of these officials, and to this peasant he made no reply whatsoever.

And this peasant came to make his complaint to Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, and on the first occasion he said, "O my lord steward, greatest one of the great ones, guide of the things that are not and of these that are, when thou goest down into the Sea of Truth,<sup>[5]</sup> (The name of a lake in the Other World; see *Book of the Dead*, Chap. 17, l. 24.) and dost sail thereon, may the attachment (?) of thy sail not tear away, may thy boat not drift (?), may no accident befall thy

mast, may the poles of thy boat not be broken, mayest thou not run aground when thou wouldst walk on the land, may the current not carry thee away, mayest thou not taste the calamities of the stream, mayest thou never see a face of fear, may the timid fish come to thee, and mayest thou obtain fine, fat waterfowl. O thou who art the father of the orphan, the husband of the widow, the brother of the woman who hath been put away by her husband, and the clothier of the motherless, grant that I may place thy name in this land in connection with all good law. Guide in whom there is no avarice, great man in whom there is no meanness, who destroyest falsehood and makest what is true to exist, who comest to the word of my mouth, I speak that thou mayest hear. Perform justice, O thou who art praised, to whom those who are most worthy of praise give praise. Do away the oppression that weigheth me down. Behold, I am weighted with sorrow, behold, I am sorely wronged. Try me, for behold, I suffer greatly.”

Now this peasant spake these words in the time of the King of the South, the King of the North, Nebkaurā, whose word is truth. And Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, went into the presence of His Majesty, and said, “My Lord, I have found one of these peasants who can really speak with true eloquence. His goods have been stolen from him by an official who is in my service, and behold, he hath come to lay before me a complaint concerning this.” His Majesty said unto Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, “If thou wouldst see me in a good state of health, keep him here, and do not make any answer at all to anything which he shall say, so that he may continue to speak. Then let that which he shall say be done into writing, and brought unto us, so that we may hear it. Take care that his wife and his children have food to live upon, and see that one of these peasants goeth to remove want from his house. Provide food for the peasant himself to live upon, but thou shalt make the provision in such a way that the food may be given to him without letting him know that it is thou who hast given it to him. Let the food be given to his friends and let them give it to him.” So there were given unto him four bread-cakes and two pots of beer daily. These were provided by Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, and he gave them to a friend, and it was this friend who gave them to the peasant. And Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, sent instructions to the governor of [the Oasis of] Sekhet-hemat to supply the wife of the peasant with daily rations, and there were given unto her regularly the bread-cakes that were made from three measures of corn.

Then this peasant came a second time to lay his complaint [before Rensi], and he found him as he was coming out.....and asked for justice. Rensi was reluctant

to award the peasant with his stolen goods. Rensi was advised by his councilors that he should back his own man and not the peasant no matter how eloquently he spoke. The peasant came a third time and Rensi had him beaten with whips. ... The peasant came back to Rensi a total of nine times each time beseeching him for justice and to have his good returned....

Then Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, caused two of his servants to go and bring back the peasant. Now this peasant was afraid, for he believed that he would be beaten severely because of the words which he had spoken to him. And this peasant said, "This is [like] the coming of the thirsty man to salt tears, and the taking of the mouth of the suckling child to the breast of the woman that is dry. That the sight of which is longed for cometh not, and only death approacheth."

Then Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, said, "Be not afraid, O peasant, for behold, thou shalt dwell with me." Then this peasant swore an oath, saying, "Assuredly I will eat of thy bread, and drink of thy beer for ever." Then Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, said, "Come hither, however, so that thou mayest hear thy petitions"; and he caused to be [written] on a roll of new papyrus all the complaints which this peasant had made, each complaint according to its day. And Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, sent the papyrus to the King of the South, the King of the North, Nebkaurā, whose word is truth, and it pleased the heart of His Majesty more than anything else in the whole land. And His Majesty said, "Pass judgment on thyself, O son of Meru." And Rensi, the son of Meru, the steward, despatched two men to bring him back. And he was brought back, and an embassy was despatched to Sekhet Hemat.... Six persons, besides ... his grain, and his millet, and his asses, and his dogs.... [The remaining lines are mutilated, but the words which are visible make it certain that Tehutinekht the thief was punished, and that he was made to restore to the peasant everything which he had stolen from him.]

**Source:** Budge, Wallis E. A. 1914. *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 169–184. London: J. M. Dent & Sons. Available online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15932/15932-h/15932-h.htm>.

#### Explorers' Accounts

*Nearly all 19th-century explorers kept daily journals for their notes, once later using them to write works that were published. We have been able to use several of them in this encyclopedia, What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the*



*Nile by John Hanning Speke is an account of his expedition under Sir Richard Francis Burton. Two others were also helpful: A Walk Across Africa by James August Grant, who accompanied Speke on his second expedition, and How I Found Livingston by Henry Morton Stanley, the first of his African adventures. When reading these, the reader is cautioned to remember when these books were written with the prevailing belief that Europeans, especially the English, were vastly superior to the Africans. Not all of the information in these accounts can be taken as absolute truth, but for the explorers it was difficult to admit that Africans possessed wisdom or knowledge. Even local statements of origins were dismissed in favor of European interpretations, often without any backing authority. Speke claimed the Tutsi were part of the Masai and journeyed to South Africa where they became the Kafir Zulu. Speke claimed the word kafir was their own name for themselves and did not understand that it is the Arabic word for those with no religion. In South Africa, the term kafir became equivalent to the “N word” in the United States and was hardly something Africans would use. Speke also began the European belief in the separateness of the Tutsi and Hutu, with the superior Tutsi being taller, lighter skinned, and with Caucasian features of thin lips and thin noses, all of which were interpreted as marks of their “superior” status and origin.*

*All three of the writers presented here use the language of Victorians. Where more direct and economical is reference today, for Victorians writing about travel the more words that could be used, the better. The extra verbiage added to the value of the text for the reader of the day. No editing of the verbose language has been done, and the original texts are what are presented to you as the reader.*

*Speke’s journals were always controversial, even in his own day. Speke suffered a fever as a child that affected his eyes and made it hard for him to concentrate on the written page. Nonetheless, he was a skilled hunter and a fairly skilled surveyor, but his surveying skills were ridiculed by Burton. The extract below is from his first book; this is where he first sees Lake Victoria.*

## **Document 6: What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile**

*Speke’s account of his first visit to what he named Lake Victoria was written*

*originally as a journal like most travel and exploration accounts of the time. Writers needed to be able write detailed accounts of what would later be called deep description of not only the geography encountered but also the curious customs of local people. Speke was not able to speak any of the local languages or the two most common “international” languages of the day, Arabic and Swahili. As result, his observations and notes about indigenous peoples are far from accurate and tend to reveal his ethnocentrism as a Victorian European. Nonetheless, this is the chapter in which he first sees the great lake that would prove to be the source of the Nile. Both Speke and Burton knew of the large lake the Swahili and Arabs called Ukéréwé. Also included is an excerpt of Speke’s questionable ethnographic observations.*

#### Chapter IV.

First Sight of the Victoria N’yanza—Its Physical Geography—Speculations on its Being the Source of the Nile—Sport on the Lake—Sultans Machunda and Mahaya—Missionary Accounts of the Geography—Arab Accounts—Regrets at Inability to Complete the Discovery—The March Resumed—History of the Watuta—Hippopotamus-hunting—Adventures—Kahama.

August 3d.—The caravan, after quitting Isamiro, began winding up a long but gradually inclined hill—which, as it bears no native name, I shall call Somerset—until it reached its summit, when the vast expanse of the pale-blue waters of the N’yanza burst suddenly upon my gaze. It was early morning. The distant sea-line of the north horizon was defined in the calm atmosphere between the north and west points of the compass; but even this did not afford me any idea of the breadth of the lake, as an archipelago of islands (*vide* Map, Bengal Archipelago), each consisting of a single hill, rising to a height of 200 or 300 feet above the water, intersected the line of vision to the left; while on the right the western horn of the Ukéréwé Island cut off any farther view of its distant waters to the eastward of north. A sheet of water—an elbow of the sea, however, at the base of the low range on which I stood—extended far away to the eastward, to where, in the dim distance, a hummock-like elevation of the mainland marked what I understood to be the south and east angle of the lake. The important islands of Ukéréwé and Mzita, distant about twenty or thirty miles, formed the visible north shore of this firth. The name of the former of these islands was familiar to us as that by which this long-sought lake was usually known. It is reported by the natives to be of no great extent; and though of no considerable elevation, I

could discover several spurs stretching down to the water's edge from its central ridge of hills. The other island, Mzita, is of greater elevation, of a hog-backed shape, but being more distant, its physical features were not so distinctly visible.

In consequence of the northern islands of the Bengal Archipelago before mentioned obstructing the view,...; while below me, at no great distance, was the debouchure of the creek, which enters the lake from the south, and along the banks of which my last three days' journey had led me. This view was one which, even in a well-known and explored country, would have arrested the traveller by its peaceful beauty. The islands, each swelling in a gentle slope to a rounded summit, clothed with wood between the rugged angular closely-cropping rocks of granite, seemed mirrored in the calm surface of the lake; on which I here and there detected a small black speck, the tiny canoe of some Muanza fisherman. On the gently shelving plain below me, blue smoke curled above the trees, which here and there partially concealed villages and hamlets, their brown thatched roofs contrasting with the emerald green of the beautiful milk-bush, the coral branches of which cluster in such profusion round the cottages, and form alleys and hedgerows about the villages as ornamental as any garden shrub in England. But the pleasure of the mere view vanished in the presence of those more intense and exciting emotions which are called up by the consideration of the commercial and geographical importance of the prospect before me.

I no longer felt any doubt that the lake at my feet gave birth to that interesting river, the source of which has been the subject of so much speculation, and the object of so many explorers. The Arabs' tale was proved to the letter. This is a far more extensive lake than the Tanganyika; "so broad you could not see across it, and so long that nobody knew its length." I had now the pleasure of perceiving that a map I had constructed on Arab testimony, and sent home to the Royal Geographical Society before leaving Unyanyembé, was so substantially correct that in its general outlines I had nothing whatever to alter. Further, as I drew that map after proving their first statements about the Tanganyika, which were made before my going there, I have every reason to feel confident of their veracity.

... as far as I can ascertain, it is. Muanza, our journey's end, now lay at our feet. It is an open, well-cultivated plain on the southern end, and lies almost flush with the lake; a happy, secluded-looking corner, containing every natural facility to make life pleasant. After descending the hill, we followed along the borders of the lake, and at first entered Mahaya's Palace, when the absence of

boats arousing my suspicions, made me inquire where the Arabs, on coming to Muanza, and wishing to visit Ukéréwé, usually resided. This, I heard, was some way farther on; so with great difficulty I persuaded the porters to come away and proceed at once to where they said an Arab was actually living. It was a singular coincidence that, after Sheikh Snay's caution as to my avoiding Sultan Mahaya's Palace, by inquiring diligently about him yesterday, and finding no one who knew his name, the first person I should have encountered was himself, and that, too, in his own Palace. The reason of this was, that big men in this country, to keep up their dignity, have several names, and thus mystify the traveller.

I then proceeded along the shore of the lake in an easterly direction, and on the way shot a number of red Egyptian geese, which were very numerous; they are the same sort here as I once saw in the Somali country. Another goose, which unfortunately I could not kill, is very different from any I ever saw or heard of: it stands as high as the Canadian bird, or higher, and is black all over, saving one little white patch beneath the lower mandible. It was fortunate that I came on here, for the Arab in question, called Mansur bin Salim, treated me very kindly, and he had retainers belonging to the country, who knew as much about the lake as anybody, and were of very great assistance....

On my inquiring about the lake's length, the man faced to the north, and began nodding his head to it; at the same time he kept throwing forward his right hand, and, making repeated snaps of his fingers, endeavoured to indicate something immeasurable; and added, that nobody knew, but he thought it probably extended to the end of the world. To the east of the Observatory, a six hours' journey, probably fourteen or fifteen miles, the village of Sukuma is situated, and there canoes are obtainable for crossing to Ukéréwé, which island being six hours' paddling, and lying due north of it, must give the firth a breadth of about fifteen miles....

During the last five or six marches, the word Marabu (Arab), instead of Mzungu (European), has usually been applied to me; and no one, I am sure, would have discovered the difference, were it not that the tiresome pagazis, to increase their own dignity and importance, generally gave the clue by singing the song of "the White Man." The Arabs at Unyanyembé had advised my donning their habit for the trip, in order to attract less attention: a vain precaution, which I believe they suggested more to gratify their own vanity by seeing an Englishman lower himself to their position, than for any benefit that I might receive by doing so. At any rate, I was more comfortable and better off in my flannel shirt, long togs, and wide-awake, than I should have been, both

mentally and physically, had I degraded myself, and adopted their hot, long, and particularly uncomfortable gown....

The N'yanza, as we now see, is a large expansive sheet of water, flush with the basal surface of the country, and lies between the Mountains of the Moon (on its western side), having, according to Dr. Krapf, snowy Kænia on its eastern flank. Krapf tells us of a large river flowing down from the western side of this snowy peak, and trending away to the north-west in a direction, as will be seen by the map, leading right into my lake. Now, returning again to the western side, we find that the N'yanza is plentifully supplied by those streams coming from the Lunæ Montes, of which the Arabs, one and all, give such consistent and concise accounts; and the flowings of which, being north-easterly, must, in course of time and distance, commingle with those north-westerly off-flowings, before mentioned, of Mount Kænia.... On the return to Unyanyembé, a native of Msalala told me that he had once travelled up the western shore of the N'yanza to the district of Kitara, or Uddu-Uganda, where, he says, coffee grows, and which place, by fair computation of the distances given as their travelling rates, I believe to be in about 1° north lat. To the east of this land, at no great distance from the shore, he described the island of Kitiri as occupied by a tribe called Watiri, who also grow coffee; and there the sea was of such great extent, and when winds blew was so boisterous, that the canoes, although as large as the Tanganyika ones (which he had also seen), did not trust themselves upon it....

The disagreeable-mannered Wasukuma (or north men) are now left behind; their mode of articulation is most painful to the civilised ear. Each word uttered seems to begin with a T'hu or T'ha, producing a sound like that of spitting sharply at an offensive object. Any stranger with his back turned would fancy himself insulted by the speaker....

Of the first mentioned, the Wataturu, a people living a little to the northward of Turu, I have only seen a few males, and they were stark naked. The Wataturu despise any one who is weak enough to cover his person, considering that he does so only to conceal his natural imperfections. Their women are currently reported to be as naked as the men, but I did not see any of them, and cannot vouch for it.

The Watuta, on the other hand, require a special notice, because they are the naked Zulu Kafirs whose peculiar costume, if such it may be called, has caused so much risibility at the Cape of Good Hope. In the very first instance, I am inclined to believe these Watuta were Cushites, who migrated from the shores of the Caspian Sea, across Arabia and the Red Sea, to Abyssinia. There, mixing

with the negro aborigines, they became in process of time woolly-headed. Later still, they broke off from the parent stock, lost their original name, and took instead that of Masai. By some unaccountable means they then separated from the Masai and migrated south to the Cape of Good Hope; here they appear to have changed their name to Kafir, from which a branch of the tribe were called Zulu Kafirs. These Zulu Kafirs becoming restless, after a time migrated again to the west of the Nyassa, and there settled with their flocks and herds, devastating the Babisa's country. From thence again they have been migrating in detachments north, up the east side of the Tanganyika Lake. Whilst doing so they came at Fipa on the Wapoka, another offshoot of the Cushite-Abyssinians, who, crossing the Nile, took the name of Wahuma, and have spread as far down south as Fipa, where their name, in course of time, had changed from Wahuma to Watusi, and from Watusi to Wapoka, in the same way as the Watuta had changed their name from Masai to Kafir and Zulu Kafir, and again from that to Watuta. Now, these Watuta are still pushing northwards, fighting, plundering, and conquering wherever they go. They have knocked the Watusi out of the southern hills of Urundi, overlooking the Tanganyika Lake, and have spread to the southern limits of Usui, devastating the countries *en route*, in the same way as they have done on the west of the Nyassa. Strange as it may appear, neither these Watuta nor the Watusi know anything of their common origin. They are very different in physical form and appearance from one another; for, whilst the Watusi *alias* Wahuma retain their Abyssinian type, the Watuta *alias* Zulu Kafirs are much more like the Somali and Masai—thus, I think, showing that the Wahuma have detached themselves at a later period than the Kafirs from the parent stock. The Wahuma are certainly the finer-looking people of the two, but the Watuta are rougher in nature. Both, however, are strictly pastoral, though the Wahuma in the equatorial regions affect to maintain large kingdoms.

**Source:** Speke, John Hanning. 1864. *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. London: William Blackwood & Sons. Available online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/8417/pg8417-images.html>.

## Document 7: *A Walk Across Africa*

*James Grant's book A Walk Across Africa demonstrated to financial backers in London that he was better than Speke. Speke's affair with a young woman in*

*Buganda was the sort of stuff Victorian gentlemen were not to do, and Speke's travel accounts had far too many errors in them to get the Royal Geographical Society to send him back. Thoughts turned to Grant as an alternative to head the next expedition, but Grant would not take the job or cast any doubts on his friend John Hanning Speke.*

*Grant was greatly incapacitated by a lack of knowledge of any African language and a serious bacterial infection in the deep flesh of his leg that did not allow him to walk. This chapter tells of his first sighting of Lake Victoria and his meeting with King Mutesa I of Buganda.*



## Chapter X

The now famous Victoria Nyanza, when seen for the first time, expanding in all its majesty, excited our wonder and admiration. Even the listless Wan-yamuezi came to have a look at its waters, stretching over ninety degrees of the horizon. The Seedees were in raptures with it, fancying themselves looking upon the ocean which surrounds their island home of Zanzibar, and I made a sketch, dotting it with imaginary steamers and ships riding at anchor in the bay. On its shores are beautiful bays, made by wooded tongues of low land (or points such as Boonjacko and Surree Points, guarding the Katonga river) running into the lake, with very often a rounded detached island at their apices. The low islands of Sesseh lie on the western shore of the lake. A deep fringe of the papyrus generally hid the view over its waters. When standing here, the hoarse tromboning of the hippopotamus, wishing to come out to graze, echoed from out these rushes. The harbours of the natives were cleared spaces composed of a spongy mass of seeds, rotten reeds, sticks, and roots. In front, for twenty yards, a short rush with a circular leaf grew, breaking the small surfing waves on the lake from two to three hundred yards, showing that it was of no depth. In the distance, large boats paddled along from the mainland to the islands of Sessek One, of five planks sewn together, having four cross bars as seats, was brought to convey me to Uganda; but after four of us had got into it with some loads, the craft was so cranky that such a voyage would have been madness, the water streaming in. Her bows and stem were pointed, standing for a yard over the water, with broad central plank from stem to stem, rounded outside, answering for a keel, and well adapted for gliding through papyrus.

The day of my arrival at the Uganda capital, the 27th of May 1862, was one not only of intense joy, but deep thankfulness. I felt that my prayers for our safety had been heard. Speke and I had been separated for upwards of four months, and on being led by some of his men to the small hut he occupied, we were so happy to be together again, and had so much to say, that when the pages of the king burst in with the royal mandate that his Highness must see me “to-morrow,” we were indignant at the intrusion. The morrow, however, came, and with it the same sharp, intelligent boys, to say that my stool might be brought to sit upon in the presence of the king. Accordingly, the present of a gun and some ammunition having been graciously received by him, at three o’clock, dressed in my best suit—, white trousers, blue flannel coat, shepherd’s-plaid shirt, a helmet, and a red turban—I sallied forth with Speke and some Seedees to make the call. It may be mentioned, as a curious custom of the court at Uganda, that when I told Speke that I meant to wear knickerbockers at the levee, he warned me that I should not be considered “dressed” if any portion of my bare leg was left exposed. This costume, because my stockings were not long enough, had therefore to be abandoned for white trousers. In proceeding to the palace we had to make one short descent, cross a bog, with grass thrown over it to keep the feet from being soiled, and rise on a broad road to the top of a hill, on which several hundred houses were built, each surrounded with a screen of tall reeds. The outer gate, having iron bells behind it, was slid aside, and we entered under a cord strung with charms. Here was a wide oblong space, screened all round; one steep-roofed house, beautifully thatched, was the only dwelling visible. Inside its wide threshold sat a single figure; and on the open space in front a mob of bare-headed, well-dressed Africans sat, forming a crescent, and facing “His Majesty M’tessa.” Our approach was abruptly stopped, and we were directed to halt.... ten minutes elapsed ere we were admitted. We next entered a similar place, but smaller, and stood in the sun,



uncomfortable enough, till permitted to be seated on our stools, with our hats off and umbrellas up. M'tessa sat upon a bench of grass, with a dog with him. His kamaraviona (commander in chief) was the only man allowed to sit at his feet; a sister and several women were on His left, also seated on the ground under the shade of the lofty cane-and-grass building. His quick eye detected that part of my hand had been cut off. "How did this happen?" He no doubt fancied that some offence had been committed by me, as it was the custom of his court to maim people by cutting off fingers, feet, or ears for even slight offences. He spoke in whispers to his pages, when Mariboo, the officer who had charge of me from Karague, informed him that I had received the wound in my hand in action; he also told him of the difficulties he had in bringing me to his majesty. The people listened with the most perfect decorum, only once interrupted by a sudden arrest. Maulah, the chief "detective," observing some breach of etiquette—probably a man speaking above his breath—suddenly seized the offender, and dragged him away. The look of anguish of the miserable creature thus apprehended was most painful. No one ventured to show sympathy; and Maulah soon returned alone, looking pleased and satisfied. Conversation is never interrupted by these scenes; music from drums and other instruments drown any noise made by a poor prisoner, or it is continued to please the ears of those attending the levee. The mode of testifying allegiance was curious; the mob suddenly stood up en masse, with their long sticks balanced in the air, and charged towards the threshold several times, with shouts of praise for their king, who made no acknowledgment. The court broke up, after an hour, by the king walking away on tiptoe, with the most ludicrous swagger, through a screen leading into another enclosure. The doors were opened and shut by men, who watched every movement of the king, for fear they should be discovered off the alert, and punished according to his caprice. A short time afterwards, a third scene was prepared for us. On entering the courtyard, M'tessa leant in a studied, affected attitude against the portico; about two hundred women sat on the ground on one side, and we were told to bring our chairs to within twenty yards of him, facing the women. No men except our Seede interpreters were present. The remarks of the great potentate, who regarded us with a kindly surprised air, were confined to his favourite women, and seemed to be concerning our appearance. After a time, the thought seemed to strike him that we all ought to remove to some more shaded place. This was the only sensible thing he had done. Making us draw our stools close to the iron chair on which he sat, the conversation turned upon sport, our expedition, &c. A woman ran to fetch the gun he had that day been presented with; two others held spears beautifully polished.... Grant describes the Ganda King Mutesa I.... He was a tall, well-built young fellow, sprightly in manner, very vain, his woolly hair dressed with the greatest care; small head, remarkably prominent clever-looking clear eyes, good teeth, and long nails to his hands and feet; the instep of the latter was, as in most of the Waganda, highly arched, indicating a well-moulded sinewy leg. His bark-cloth "toga" had not a speck upon it, and was neatly knotted over the right shoulder, concealing his whole body. His ornaments of beads were made with great taste in the choice of colours; the most minute beads of white, blue, and brown were made into rings and rosettes, which he wore round his neck and arms. Each finger had upon it a ring of brass; on the third finger of the left hand he wore a gold ring, given him by Speke; with these he played while sitting at his levees, occasionally receiving a golden-coloured gourd-cup of wine from a maid of honour sitting by his side; after each sip, a napkin of bark-cloth was used by him to wipe his mouth. The only unseemly vulgarity he was guilty of while on his throne was to use his napkin to rub away the perspiration from his person....

Grant's interview with Mutesa ended with two of the women being led away by pages to be executed for some unknown offense.

**Source:** Grant, James Augustus. 1834. *A Walk Across Africa: Domestic Scenes*

from *My Nile Journal*. London: William Blackwood & Sons. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/awalkacrossafri00grangoog>.

## Document 8: *How I Found Livingstone*

*Henry Morton Stanley was perhaps the "best" of the European explorers in that he actually was able to prove the sources of the Nile by following them to their origins. He was, however, one of the least recognized because of his bad reputation for unnecessary cruelty to his men. He was backed in two of his major undertakings by newspapers rather than by the Royal Geographical Society. His most famous expedition was his trek to find Dr. David Livingstone. During this trek, he and Livingstone were able to prove that Lake Tanganyika does not drain to the Nile but is landlocked. In this passage, Stanley recounts the tale of a massacre of natives by Arab slavers and witnessed by Livingstone; the sight and the tale greatly disturbed the deeply religious Scotsman. Stanley also includes a good deal of ethnographic description, this time provided by Livingstone rather than direct observation. Webb's or Lualaba or Rua River in the end did not connect to the Nile but to the Congo as Stanley and Livingstone discovered.*

Webb's River must be traced to its connection with some portion of the old Nile. When these two things have been accomplished, then, and not till then, can the mystery of the Nile be explained. The two countries through which the marvellous lacustrine river, the Lualaba, flows, with its manifold lakes and broad expanse of water, are Rua (the Uruwua of Speke) and Manyuema. For the first time Europe is made aware that between the Tanganika and the known sources of the Congo there exist teeming millions of the negro race, who never saw, or heard of the white people who make such a noisy and busy stir outside of Africa. Upon the minds of those who had the good fortune to see the first specimen of these remarkable white races in Dr. Livingstone, he seems to have made a favourable impression, though, through misunderstanding his object, and coupling him with the Arabs, who make horrible work there, his life was sought after more than once. These two extensive countries, Rua and Manyuema, are populated by true heathens, governed, not as the sovereignties of Karagwah, Urundi, and Uganda, by despotic kings, but each village by its own sultan or lord. Thirty miles outside of their own immediate settlements, the most

intelligent of these small chiefs seem to know nothing. Thirty miles from the Lualaba, there were but few people who had ever heard of the great river. Such ignorance among the natives of their own country naturally increased the labours of Livingstone. Compared with these, all tribes and nations in Africa with whom Livingstone came in contact may be deemed civilized, yet, in the arts of home manufacture, these wild people of Manyuema were far superior to any he had seen. Where other tribes and nations contented themselves with hides and skins of animals thrown negligently over their shoulders, the people of Manyuema manufactured a cloth from fine grass, which may favorably compare with the finest grass cloth of India. They also know the art of dyeing them in various colours—black, yellow, and purple. The Wangwana, or freed-men of Zanzibar, struck with the beauty of the fabric, eagerly exchange their cotton cloths for fine grass cloth; and on almost every black man from Manyuema I have seen this native cloth converted into elegantly made damirs (Arabic)—short jackets. These countries are also very rich in ivory. The fever for going to Manyuema to exchange tawdry beads for its precious tusks is of the same kind as that which impelled men to go to the gulches and placers of California, Colorado, Montana, and Idaho; after nuggets to Australia, and diamonds to Cape Colony. Manyuema is at present the El Dorado of the Arab and the Wamrima tribes. It is only about four years since that the first Arab returned from Manyuema, with such wealth of ivory, and reports about the fabulous quantities found there, that ever since the old beaten tracks of Karagwah, Uganda, Ufipa, and Marungu have been comparatively deserted. The people of Manyuema, ignorant of the value of the precious article, reared their huts upon ivory stanchions. Ivory pillars were common sights in Manyuema, and, hearing of these, one can no longer wonder at the ivory palace of Solomon. For generations they have used ivory tusks as door-posts and supports to the eaves, until they had become perfectly rotten and worthless....

The accounts which the Doctor brings from that new region are most deplorable. He was an unwilling spectator of a horrible deed—a massacre committed on the inhabitants of a populous district who had assembled in the market-place on the banks of the Lualaba, as they had been accustomed to do for ages. It seems that the Wamanyuema are very fond of marketing, believing it to be the summum bonum of human enjoyment. They find endless pleasure in chaffering with might and main for the least mite of their currency—the last bead; and when they gain the point to which their peculiar talents are devoted, they feel intensely happy. The women are excessively fond of this marketing,

and, as they are very beautiful, the market place must possess considerable attractions for the male sex. It was on such a day amidst such a scene, that Tagamoyo, a half-caste Arab, with his armed slave escort, commenced an indiscriminate massacre by firing volley after volley into the dense mass of human beings. It is supposed that there were about 2,000 present, and at the first sound of the firing these poor people all made a rush for their canoes. In the fearful hurry to avoid being shot, the canoes were paddled away by the first fortunate few who got possession of them; those that were not so fortunate sprang into the deep waters of the Lualaba, and though many of them became an easy prey to the voracious crocodiles which swarmed to the scene, the majority received their deaths from the bullets of the merciless Tagamoyo and his villainous band. The Doctor believes, as do the Arabs themselves, that about 400 people, mostly women and children, lost their lives, while many more were made slaves. This outrage is only one of many such he has unwillingly witnessed, and he is utterly unable to describe the feelings of loathing he feels for the inhuman perpetrators.

Slaves from Manyuema command a higher price than those of any other country, because of their fine forms and general docility. The women, the Doctor said repeatedly, are remarkably pretty creatures, and have nothing, except the hair, in common with the negroes of the West Coast. They are of very light colour, have fine noses, well-cut and not over-full lips, while the prognathous jaw is uncommon. These women are eagerly sought after as wives by the half-castes of the East Coast, and even the pure Omani Arabs do not disdain to take them in marriage....

Rua, at a place called Katanga, is rich in copper. The copper-mines of this place have been worked for ages. In the bed of a stream, gold has been found, washed down in pencil-shaped pieces or in particles as large as split peas. Two Arabs have gone thither to prospect for this metal; but, as they are ignorant of the art of gulch-mining, it is scarcely possible that they will succeed. From these highly important and interesting discoveries, Dr. Livingstone was turned back, when almost on the threshold of success, by the positive refusal of his men to accompany him further. They were afraid to go on unless accompanied by a large force of men; and, as these were not procurable in Manyuema, the Doctor reluctantly turned his face towards Ujiji....

Livingstone arrived at Ujiji, October 16th, almost at death's door. On the way he had been trying to cheer himself up, since he had found it impossible to contend against the obstinacy of his men, with, "It won't take long; five or six

months more; it matters not since it cannot be helped. I have got my goods in Ujiji, and can hire other people, and make a new start again.” These are the words and hopes by which he tried to delude himself into the idea that all would be right yet; but imagine the shock he must have suffered, when he found that the man to whom was entrusted his goods for safe keeping had sold every bale for ivory.

**Source:** Stanley, Henry M. 1872. *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa; Including Four Months' Residence with Dr. Livingstone*, pp. 459–461, 463–465. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle. Available online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=h70oAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=how+i+found+livingstone&hl=>

*This section on documents presents three important agreements on the water of the Nile. The 1929 agreement between Egypt and Britain determined the amount of Nile water needed for Egypt to irrigate its crops, in particular, its cotton crop. The 1959 agreement between Egypt and Sudan permitted the Egyptian government to build the Aswan High Dam and determined the amount of water that could be used by both countries. The second document is the official rejection of the United States to provide aid to Egypt. Egypt had sought an arms deal with Czechoslovakia that had been brokered by the Soviet Union. Egypt joined the nonaligned movement, but the Eisenhower administration in the United States painted Egyptian President al-Nasir as a communist because of his strong pan-Arab stance. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in particular decided al-Nasir was bad. The final document is the declaration of the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework to be the basis for new negotiations about the shares that Nile Basin countries would have. The document is not fully presented here, just the main principles. Egypt, Sudan, and South Sudan have yet to sign the agreement (and Egypt and Sudan say they never will), but Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo have.*

## **Document 9: Exchange of Notes between Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Egyptian Government on the Use of Waters of the Nile for Irrigation**

*The first of the documents presented deals with the understanding between Great Britain and Egypt over the waters of the Nile. Egypt was a major producer of cotton for the British textile industry, and both countries wanted to preserve Egypt's paramount access to most of the Nile's flow. Britain was the governing colonial power not only of Egypt also of but Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanganyika. This meant that nearly the whole of the Nile basin was controlled by Britain, and Egypt's interests were seen by Britain as the most important. This exchange between Egypt and Britain served as the primary understanding*

*on the distribution of Nile water until today.*

May 7, 1929 Signed at Cairo,

No I:

Muhammad Mahmoud Pacha to Lord Lloyd, office of the Council of Ministers  
(Cairo, 7 May 1929)

Your Excellency,

Further to our recent conversations, I have the honour to bring to the knowledge of your Excellency the viewpoint of the Egyptian Government on the irrigation problems, which formed the subject of our discussion.

1. The Egyptian Government wishes to acknowledge that a solution to these problems would not be deferred to a subsequent date when it became possible for the two Governments to come to terms on the status of the Sudan but, regarding the settlement of the present provisions, it expressly reserves every freedom at any negotiations which could precede such an agreement.

2. Obviously, the development of the Sudan needs a quantity of water flowing from the Nile higher than used hitherto by the Sudan. Your Excellency is keenly aware of the fact that the Egyptian Government has always been desirous of encouraging such a development and shall continue in this direction. It would be ready to come to terms with her Majesty's Government on an increase in this quantity in so far as this would not infringe on neither the natural and historical rights of Egypt on the waters of the Nile nor on its agricultural development needs subject to obtaining satisfactory assurances with regard to the protection of Egyptian interests as set forth in the ensuing paragraphs of the present note.

3. This is why the Egyptian Government accepts the conclusions of the 1925 Nile Commission whose report features in the Annex and which is considered as forming an integral part of the present agreement. Nevertheless, in view of the delay on the construction of the Gebel Aulia dam which, according to paragraph 40 of the Nile Commission Report is considered as being the counterpart of the Gezira project, the Egyptian Government suggests that the date and the quantities of gradual sampling of waters of the Nile carried out by Sudan during the months of flood as stipulated in Article 57 of the Report of the Commission be modified in such a manner that Sudan may not take out more than 126 cubic metres per second before 1936 with the understanding that the periods set forth in the above article will remain unchanged until the stipulated figure of 126 cubic metres per second is reached. These quantities are based on the Nile

Commission Report, and may therefore cover the reviews as set down in the Report.

4. It is also understood that the following provisions will be observed with regard to irrigation works of the Nile:

- i. The Inspector General of the Irrigation Service in Sudan, his staff as well as other officials that the Ministry of Public Works may appoint shall have every liberty to cooperate with the resident engineer of Sennar with a view to measuring the rates of flow and the maximum levels in order that the Egyptian Government may ensure that the water distribution and control of the dam be executed in observance of the Agreement concluded. The detailed practical provisions adopted by joint agreement by the Minister of Public Works and the Irrigation Adviser to the Sudanese Government shall come into force on the date on which the present note shall be confirmed.
- ii. Except with the prior consent of the Egyptian Government, no irrigation works shall be undertaken nor electric generators installed along the Nile and its branches nor on the lakes from which they flow if these lakes are situated in Sudan or in countries under British administration which could jeopardize the interests of Egypt either by reducing the quantity of water flowing into Egypt or appreciably changing the date of its flow or causing its level to drop.
- iii. In order to enable it take all necessary steps with a view to conducting a study and recording the water conservation of the Nile in Sudan, the Egyptian Government shall enjoy all the facilities required to this end.
- iv. Should the Egyptian Government decide to undertake work on the river and its branches, or take steps with a view to increasing water supply for the benefit of Egypt, it shall beforehand, come to terms with the local authorities on the measures to be taken in order to safeguard local interests. The construction, maintenance and management of works mentioned above shall be placed under the direct control of the Egyptian Government.
- v. The Government of Her British Majesty in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland shall use its good offices so that the carrying out of surveys, taking of measures, the conduction of preceding paragraphs be facilitated by the Government of regions under British influence.
- vi. It is obvious that within the framework of the implementation of operations envisaged by the present note, uncertainties may appear from time to time regarding the interpretation of a question of principle or



technical or administrative points. Each problem of this nature shall be examined within a spirit of reciprocal honesty.

- vii. In case of a dispute arising from the interpretation or execution of the above provisions or if one of the parties contravened the stipulated provisions of the present note and should the two Governments fail to resolve this problem, this problem shall be referred to an independent body for arbitration.

5. The present agreement can in no way be considered as affecting the control of the River - this being a problem which will cover free discussions between the two Governments within the framework of negotiations on the Sudan.

I seize this occasion, *etc.*

M.MAHMOUD

Chairman of the Council of Ministers

No 2:

Lord Lloyd to Mahmoud Pacha  
(Cairo, 7 May 1929)

Sir,

1. I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of the note that your Excellency addressed me today.

2. By confirming the provisions on which we mutually agreed and which were enumerated in your Excellency's note, I am entrusted with the task of expressing the satisfaction of her British Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland at the fact that these discussions have led to an agreement which will certainly facilitate the development of Egypt and the Sudan and promote their prosperity.

3. Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom shares the viewpoint of his Excellency on the fact that this agreement should deal, and deals essentially with the control of irrigation devices on the basis of the Nile Commission Report and does not affect the status quo in Sudan.

4. In conclusion, I would like to remind your Excellency that Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom has already recognized the natural and historical right of Egypt to the waters of the Nile. I am entrusted with the responsibility of declaring that Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom considers the observance of these rights as a fundamental principle of the policy of Great Britain and wishes to assure your Excellency that the principle of this agreement as well as its detailed stipulated provisions will be observed irrespective of the time and circumstances.

I seize this occasion, *etc.*

Lloyd

High Commissioner

The Residence  
Cairo, 7 May 1929

**Source:** International Water Law Project. No date. *Exchange of Notes between Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Egyptian Government on the Use of Waters of the Nile for Irrigation.* [http://internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Egypt\\_UK\\_Nile\\_Agree\\_1929.html](http://internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Egypt_UK_Nile_Agree_1929.html). Reprinted with permission from the International Water Law Project.

## **Document 10: United Arab Republic and Sudan Agreement (with Annexes) for the Full Utilization of the Nile Waters**

*Sudan had been part of Egypt, but in 1956 the new Republic of Egypt recognized the independence of Sudan. To force the British out of Egyptian affairs, the new republic was willing to let Sudan be its own independent country—and because it supported Egypt's position as a champion of independence movements in the Arab world and Africa. However, Egypt's control of the Nile's water was still of primary concern to the Egyptians, and they would not relinquish any of their share to another country. Most of Sudan's projects, such as the Gezira Scheme, had already been planned and Sudan's share of the Nile already established. The agreement between Egypt and Sudan assume that no other country will use more than "its share" as measured by the Egyptians and British in 1929. This agreement also sets the idea of the Jonglei Canal to increase the amount of water in the White Nile. At the date of this agreement, Uganda, Ethiopia, and South Sudan were not mentioned and their share of the water was not discussed. The agreement is based on the amount needed by Egypt to remain a cotton producer.*

Signed at Cairo, on 8 November 1959; in force 12 December 1959

Registered by the United Arab Republic on 7 February 1963

6519 U.N.T.S. 63

As the River Nile needs projects, for its full control and for increasing its yield for the full utilization of its waters by the Republic of the Sudan and the United Arab Republic on technical working arrangements other than those now applied:

And as these works require for their execution and administration, full agreement and co—operation between the two Republics in order to regulate their benefits and utilize the Nile waters in a manner which secures the present and future requirements of the two countries:

And as the Nile waters Agreement concluded in 1929<sup>2</sup> provided only for the partial use of the Nile waters and did not extend to include a complete control of the River waters, the two Republics have agreed on the following:

First

### THE PRESENT ACQUIRED RIGHTS

1. That the amount of the Nile waters used by the United Arab Republic until this Agreement is signed shall be her acquired right before obtaining the benefits of the Nile Control Projects and the projects which will increase its yield and which projects are referred to in this Agreement; The total of this acquired right is 48 Millions of cubic meters per year as measured at Aswan.
2. That the amount of the waters used at present by the Republic of Sudan shall be her acquired right before obtaining the benefits of the projects referred to above. The total amount of this acquired right is 4 Millions of cubic meters per measured at Aswan.

Second  
THE NILE CONTROL PROJECTS AND THE DIVISION OF THEIR  
BENEFITS BETWEEN THE TWO REPUBLICS

1. In order to regulate the River waters and control their flow into the sea, the two Republics agree that the United Arab Republic constructs the Sudd el Aali at Aswan as the first link of a series of projects on the Nile for over-year storage.
2. In order to enable the Sudan to utilize its share of the water, the two Republics agree that the Republic of Sudan shall construct the Roseires Darn on the Blue Nile and any other works which the Republic of the Sudan considers essential for the utilization of its share.
3. The net benefit from the Sudd el Aali Reservoir shall be calculated on the basis of the average natural River yield of water at Aswan in the years of this century, which is estimated at about 84 Billiards of cubic meters per year. The acquired rights of the two Republics referred to in Article "First" as measured at Aswan, and the average of losses of over-year storage of the Sudd El Aali Reservoir shall be deducted from this yield, and the balance shall be the net benefit which shall be divided between the two Republics.
4. The net benefit from the Sudd el Aali Reservoir mentioned in the previous item, shall be divided between the two Republics at the ratio of 14½ for the Sudan and 7½ for the United Arab Republic so long as the average river yield remains in future within the limits of the average yield referred to in the previous paragraph. This means that, if the average yield remains the same as the average of the previous years of this century which is estimated at 84 Billiards, and if the losses of over-year storage remain equal to the present estimate of 10 Billiards, the net benefit of the Sudd el Aali Reservoir shall be 22 Billiards of which the share of the Republic of the Sudan shall be 14½ Billiards and the share of the United Arab Republic shall be 7½ Billiards. By adding these shares to their acquired rights, the total share from the net yield of the Nile after the full operation of the Sudd el Aali Reservoir shall be 18½ Billiards for the Republic of the Sudan and 55½ Billiards for the United Arab Republic.  
  
But if the average yield increases, the resulting net benefit from this increase shall be divided between the two Republics, in equal shares.
5. As the net benefit from the Sudd el Aali (referred to in item 3 Article Second) is calculated on the basis of the average natural yield of the river at Aswan in the



years of this century after the deduction therefrom of the acquired rights of the two Republics and the average losses of over-year storage at the Sudd el Aali Reservoir, it is agreed that this net benefit shall be the subject of revision by the two parties at reasonable intervals to be agreed upon after starting the full operation of the Sudd el Aali Reservoir.

6. The United Arab Republic agrees to pay to the Sudan Republic 15 Million Egyptian Pounds as full compensation for the damage resulting to the Sudanese existing properties as a result of the storage in the Sudd el Aali Reservoir up to a reduced level of 182 meters (survey datum). The payment of this compensation shall be affected in accordance with the annexed agreement between the two parties.

7. The Republic of the Sudan undertakes to arrange before July 1963, the final transfer of the population of Halfa and all other Sudanese inhabitants whose lands shall be submerged by the stored water.

8. It is understood that when the Sudd el Aali is fully operated for over-year storage, the United Arab Republic will not require storing any water at Gebel Aulia Dam. And the two contracting parties will in due course, discuss all matters related to this renunciation.

Third  
PROJECTS FOR THE UTILIZATION OF LOST WATERS IN THE NILE  
BASIN

In view of the fact that at present, considerable volumes of the Nile Basin Waters are lost in the swamps of Bahr El Jebel, Bahr El Zeraf, Balir el Ghazal and the Sobat River, and as it is essential that efforts should be exerted in order to prevent these losses and to increase the yield of the River for use in agricultural expansion in the two Republics, the two Republics agree to the following:

1. The Republic of the Sudan in agreement with the United Arab Republic shall construct projects for the increase of the River yield by preventing losses of waters of the Nile Basin in the swamps of Bahr El Jebel, Bahr el Zeraf, Bahr el Ghazal and its tributaries, the Sobat River and its tributaries and the White Nile Basin. The net yield of these projects shall be divided equally between the two Republics and each of them shall also contribute equally to the costs.

The Republic of the Sudan shall finance the above-mentioned projects out of its own funds and the United Arab Republic shall pay its share in the costs in the same ratio of 50% allotted for her in the yield of these projects.

2. If the United Arab Republic, on account of the progress in its planned agricultural expansion should find it necessary to start on any of the increase of the Nile yield projects, referred to in the previous paragraph, after its approval by the two Governments and at a time when the Sudan Republic does not need such project, the United Arab Republic shall notify the Sudan Republic of the time convenient for the former to start the execution of the project. And each of the two Republics shall, within two years after such notification, present a date-phased programme for the utilization of its share of the waters saved by the project, and each of the said programmes shall bind the two parties. The United Arab Republic shall at the expiry of the two years, start the execution of the projects, at its own expense. And when the Republic of Sudan is ready to utilize its share according to the agreed programme, it shall pay to the United Arab Republic a share of all the expenses in the same ratio as the Sudan's share in benefit is to the total benefit of the project; provided that the share of either Republic shall not exceed one half of the total benefit of the project.

#### Fourth

##### TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO REPUBLICS

1. In order to ensure the technical cooperation between the Governments of the two Republics, to continue the research and study necessary for the Nile control projects and the increase of its yield and to continue the hydrological survey of its upper reaches, the two Republics agree that immediately after the signing of this Agreement a Permanent joint Technical Commission shall be formed of an equal number of members from both parties; and its functions shall be:

- a. The drawing of the basic outlines of projects for the increase of the Nile yield, and for the supervision of the studies necessary for the finalising of projects, before presentation of the same to the Governments of the two Republics for approval.
- b. The supervision of the execution of the projects approved by the two Governments.
- c. The drawing up of the working arrangements for any works to be constructed on the Nile, within the boundaries of the Sudan, and also for those to be constructed outside the boundaries of the Sudan, by agreement with the authorities concerned in the countries in which such works are constructed.
- d. The supervision of the application of all the working arrangements mentioned in (c) above in connection with works constructed within the boundaries of Sudan and also in connection with the Sudd el Aali Reservoir and Aswan Dam, through official engineers delegated for the purpose by the two Republics; and the supervision of the working of the upper Nile projects, as provided in the agreements concluded with the countries in which such projects are constructed.
- e. As it is probable that a series of low years may occur, and a succession of low levels in the Sudd el Aali Reservoir may result to such an extent as not to permit in any one year the drawing of the full requirements of the two Republics, the Technical Commission is charged with the task of devising a fair arrangement for the two Republics to follow. And the recommendations of the Commission shall be presented to the two Governments for approval.

2. In order to enable the Commission to exercise the functions enumerated in the above item, and in order to ensure the continuation of the Nile gauging and to keep observations on all its upper reaches, these duties shall be carried out

under the technical supervision of the Commission by the engineers of the Sudan Republic, and the engineers of the United Arab Republic in the Sudan and in the United Arab Republic and in Uganda.

3. The two Governments shall form the Joint Technical Commission, by a joint decree, and shall provide it with its necessary funds from their budgets. The Commission may, according to the requirements of work, hold its meetings in Cairo or in Khartoum. The Commission shall, subject to the approval of the two Governments, lay down regulations for the organisation of its meetings and its technical, administrative and financial activities.

Fifth

## GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. If it becomes necessary to hold any negotiations concerning the Nile waters, with any riparian state, outside the boundaries of the two Republics, the Governments of the Sudan Republic and the United Arab Republic shall agree on a unified view after the subject is studied by the said Technical Commission. The said unified view shall be the basis of any negotiations by the Commission with the said states.

If the negotiations result in an agreement to construct any works on the river, outside the boundaries of the two Republics, the joint Technical Commission shall after consulting the authorities in the Governments of the States concerned, draw all the technical execution details and the working and maintenance arrangements. And the Commission shall, after the sanction of the same by the Governments concerned, supervise the carrying out of the said technical agreements.

2. As the riparian states, other than the two Republics, claim a share in the Nile waters, the two Republics have agreed that they shall jointly consider and reach one unified view regarding the said claims. And if the said consideration results in the acceptance of allotting an amount of the Nile water to one or the other of the said states, the accepted amount shall be deducted from the shares of the two Republics in equal parts, as calculated at Aswan.

The Technical Commission mentioned in this agreement shall make the necessary arrangements with the states concerned, in order to ensure that their water consumption shall not exceed the amounts agreed upon.

#### Sixth

#### TRANSITIONAL PERIOD BEFORE BENEFITING FROM THE COMPLETE SUDD EL AALI RESERVOIR

As the benefiting of the two Republics from their appointed shares in the net benefit of the Sudd el Aali Reservoir shall not start before the construction and the full utilization of the Reservoir, the two parties shall agree on their agricultural expansion programmes in the transitional period from now up to the completion of the Sudd el Aali without prejudice to their present water requirements.

#### Seventh

This Agreement shall come into force after its sanction by the two contracting parties, provided that either party shall notify the other party of the date of its sanction, through the diplomatic channels.

## Eighth

Annex (1) and Annex (2, A and B) attached to this Agreement shall be considered as an integral part of this Agreement.

Written in Cairo in two Arabic original copies this 7th day of Gumada El Oula 1379, the 8th day of November 1959.

For the Republic For the United Arab of Sudan: Republic:

**Source:** International Water Law Project. No date. *United Arab Republic and Sudan Agreement (With Annexes) for the Full Utilization of the Nile Waters*. [http://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/uar\\_sudan.html](http://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/uar_sudan.html). Reprinted with permission from the International Water Law Project.

## Document 11: U.S. Statement on Aswan High Dam

*Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir (Gamal Abdel Nasser) wanted Egypt to become an industrial country and he believed a dam on the Nile would produce enough electricity to help the nation reach that goal. He also wanted Egypt's agricultural production to increase and to control the annual flood. To do this, he initially sought financial and technical aid from the United States and Britain, but part of his plan to pay for the dam would be for Egypt to use fees from the use of the Suez Canal. In 1956, al-Nasir nationalized the canal, which brought an angry response from London and Paris and three countries. Forces from Great Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt. The United States and the Soviet Union took a rare joint stance against the allies and forced Britain, France, and Israel to leave the canal zone. Nonetheless, the United States backed down on its promise of financial aid. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles disliked al-Nasir and sent a negative response to Egypt's request. Although the United States' rejection pointed out some of the issues with the dam such as environmental damage, these were issues that could have been addressed without outweighing Egypt's need for the dam. Al-Nasir's strong nationalist stance is what angered Dulles and led to U.S. rejection. Al-Nasir and Egypt were classified by Dulles as communist and anti-American. This attitude remained until the 1973 October War.*



July 19, 1956

At the request of the Government of Egypt, the United States joined in December 1955 with the United Kingdom and with the World Bank in an offer to assist Egypt in the construction of a high dam on the Nile at Aswan. This project is one of great magnitude. It would require an estimated 12 to 16 years to complete at a total cost estimated at some \$1,300,000,000, of which over \$900,000,000 represents local currency requirements. It involves not merely the rights and interests of Egypt but of other states whose waters are contributory, including Sudan, Ethiopia, and Uganda.

The December offer contemplated an extension by the United States and United Kingdom of grant aid to help finance certain early phases of the work, the effects of which would be confined solely to Egypt, with the understanding that accomplishment of the project as a whole would require a satisfactory resolution of the question of Nile water rights. Another important consideration bearing upon the feasibility of the undertaking, and thus the practicability of American aid, was Egyptian readiness and ability to concentrate its economic resources upon this vast construction program.

Developments within the succeeding 7 months have not been favorable to the success of the project, and the U.S. Government has concluded that it is not feasible in present circumstances to participate in the project. Agreement by the riparian states has not been achieved, and the ability of Egypt to devote adequate resources to assure the project's success has become more uncertain than at the time the offer was made.

This decision in no way reflects or involves any alteration in the friendly relations of the Government and people of the United States toward the Government and people of Egypt.

The United States remains deeply interested in the welfare of the Egyptian people and in the development of the Nile. It is prepared to consider at an appropriate time and at the request of the riparian states what steps might be taken toward a more effective utilization of the water resources of the Nile for the benefit of the peoples of the region. Furthermore, the United States remains ready to assist Egypt in its effort to improve the economic condition of its people and is prepared, through its appropriate agencies, to discuss these matters within the context of funds appropriated by the Congress.

The Nile Basin Cooperative Organization is an attempt by Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya for a new basis for the division of the Nile waters not based on the 1929 framework, but on the current needs of all of the Nile's countries and on

the amount of flow in the river. Since the 1929 agreement, the place where the Nile's water is measured is Aswan and Egypt is guaranteed a total annual amount based on the flow of 1929. New projects on the Nile in mainly Uganda (to be shared with Kenya) and Ethiopia threaten the flow to Egypt and Egypt and Sudan refuse to renegotiate. As of now (2016) no new agreement has been signed by all of the Nile's countries (Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Southern Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt). Egypt has threatened to bomb any new project and the agreement is not enforce.

*Agreement On the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework*

Agreement on the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework Preamble The States of the Nile River Basin, Affirming the importance of the Nile River to the economic and social well-being of the peoples of the States of the Nile River Basin, Motivated by the desire to strengthen their cooperation in relation to the Nile River, a great and vital natural resource which binds them together, and in relation to the sustainable development of the Nile River Basin, Recognizing that the Nile River, its natural resources and environment are assets of immense value to all the riparian countries, Convinced that a framework agreement governing their relations with regard to the Nile River Basin will promote integrated management, sustainable development, and harmonious utilization of the water resources of the Basin, as well as their conservation and protection for the benefit of present and future generations, Convinced also that it is in their mutual interest to establish an organization to assist them in the management and sustainable development of the Nile River Basin for the benefit of all, Mindful of the global initiatives for promoting cooperation on integrated management and sustainable development of water resources, Have agreed as follows:

Article 1 Scope of the Present Framework The present Framework applies to the use, development, protection, conservation and management of the Nile River Basin and its resources and establishes an institutional mechanism for cooperation among the Nile Basin States. Article 2 Use of Terms For the purposes of the present Cooperative Framework Agreement: (a) "Nile River Basin" means the geographical area determined by the watershed limits of the Nile River system of waters; this term is used where there is reference to environmental protection, conservation or development; (b) "Nile River system" means the Nile River and the surface waters and groundwaters which are related to the Nile River; this term is used where there is reference to utilization of water; (c) "Framework" means the present Cooperative Framework Agreement;

(d) “State of the Nile River Basin,” “Nile Basin State” or “Basin state” means a State party to the present Framework in whose territory part of the Nile River Basin is situated;

“The Commission” means the Nile River Basin Commission established under [Part III](#) of the present Framework; (f) “Water security” means the right of all Nile Basin States to reliable access to and use of the Nile River system for health, agriculture, livelihoods, production and environment.

PART I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES Article 3 General Principles The Nile River System and its waters shall be protected, used, conserved and developed in accordance with the following general principles. 1. Cooperation The principle of cooperation between States of the Nile River Basin on the basis of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, mutual benefit and good faith in order to attain optimal utilization and adequate protection and conservation of the Nile River Basin and to promote joint efforts to achieve social and economic development. 2. Sustainable development The principle of sustainable development of the Nile River Basin. 3. Subsidiarity The principle of subsidiarity, whereby development and protection of the Nile River Basin water resources is planned and implemented at the lowest appropriate level. 4. Equitable and reasonable utilization The principle of equitable and reasonable utilization of the waters of the Nile River System.

5. Prevention of the causing of significant harm The principle of preventing the causing of significant harm to other States of the Nile River Basin. 6. The right of Nile Basin States to use water within their territories The principle that each Nile Basin State has the right to use, within its territory, the waters of the Nile River System in a manner that is consistent with the other basic principles referred to herein. 7. Protection and conservation The principle that Nile Basin States take all appropriate measures, individually and, where appropriate, jointly, for the protection and conservation of the Nile River Basin and its ecosystems. 8. Information concerning planned measures The principle that the Nile Basin States exchange information on planned measures through the Nile River Basin Commission. 9. Community of interest The principle of the community of interest of the Nile Basin States in the Nile River System. 10. Exchange of data and information The principle of the regular and reciprocal exchange among States of the Nile River Basin of readily available and relevant data and information on existing measures and on the condition of water resources of the Basin, where possible in a form that facilitates its utilization by the States to which it is communicated.

11. Environmental impact assessment and audits The principle of environmental impact assessment and audits. 12. Peaceful resolution of disputes The principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes. 13. Water as a finite and vulnerable resource The principle that fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment, and must be managed in an integrated and holistic manner, linking social and economic development with protection and conservation of natural ecosystems. 14. Water has social and economic value The principle that water is a natural resource having social and economic value, whose utilization should give priority to its most economic use, taking into account the satisfaction of basic human needs and the safeguarding of ecosystems. 15. Water security The principle of water security for all Nile Basin States.

Article 10 Subsidiarity in the development and protection of the Nile River Basin In planning and implementing a project pursuant to the principle of subsidiarity set forth in Article 3(3), Nile Basin States shall: (a) allow all those within a State who will or may be affected by the project in that State to participate in an appropriate way in the planning and implementation process; (b) make every effort to ensure that the project and any related agreement is consistent with the basin-wide framework.

**Source:** *Congressional Record*. 1957 (August 21) 97(2): 14073.

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## **About the Author and Contributors**

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